



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
Sm9br
v. 3



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

THE BRIDE ELECT,

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE JILT,” “THE BREACH OF PROMISE,” “THE LIFE OF
A BEAUTY,” “COURTSHIP AND WEDLOCK,” &c.

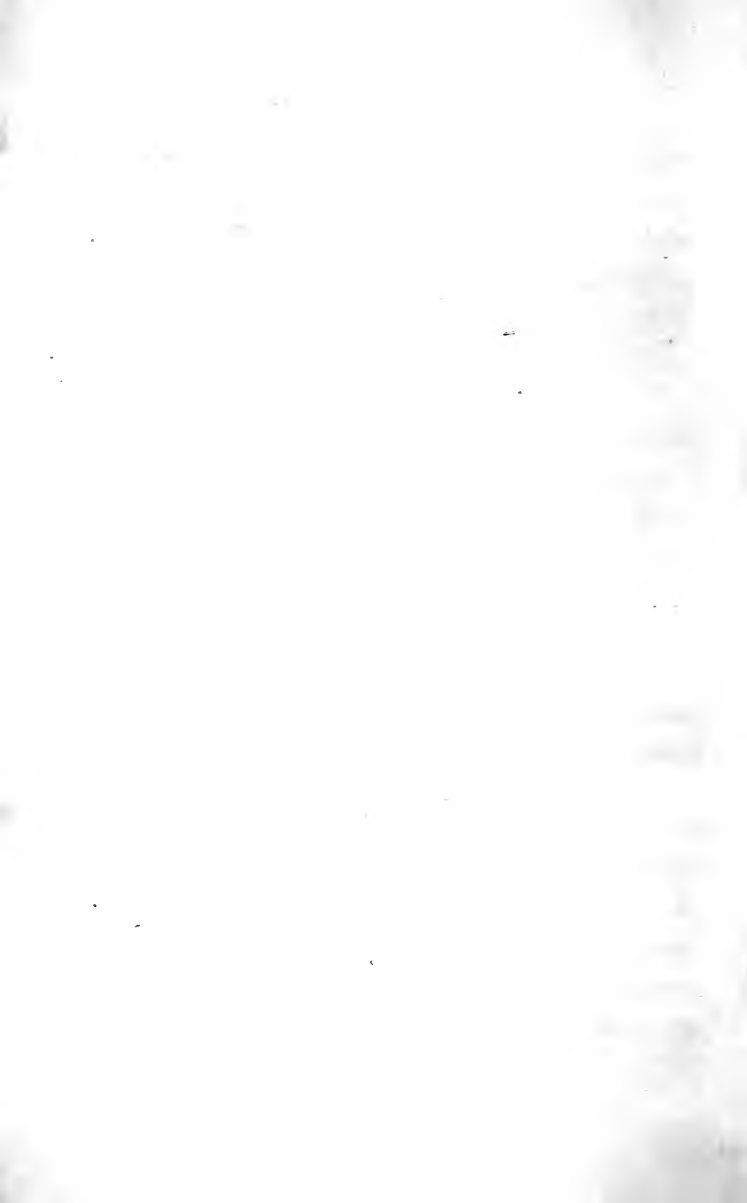
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1852.



THE BRIDE ELECT.

CHAPTER I.

THE morning rose as bright as if there were no such things as weeping eyes that ache at the sun-beams, and broken hearts whose ruins look ghastly in the glare of day. Isabel, ever an early riser, had been up betimes—There are two classes of early risers—those who rise because they cannot rest, and those who rise because they are eager to enjoy—Isabel, engrossed by her

new hopes, new affections, new triumphs, found life a banquet, at which it was rapture to appear ! fair and *feted* guest as she was !—to wake from bright dreams to brighter realities ; to array herself, rich in all the charms it is so easy to adorn, for eyes sure to delight in her beauty—The beautiful and the happy find the toilet so light and so pleasant a task too ; but if it is true that it is a pleasure to the young and a labor to the old, it is a labor also to those whose hearts are old ; and what heart does not real grief make suddenly old ?

What a contrast between the two sisters, and yet how nearly, how very nearly had their fates been the same ! Blanche naturally less active, and at one time so fond of her pretty snowy bed with its draperies of white and rose—loving her morning dreams—and generally late at the breakfast table, she was now of that miserable class of early risers, who rise because they cannot rest ; young in years but aged by grief ; the

toilet to her was indeed a toil—Poor, poor Blanche ! how selfish do love, success, and happiness make the best of us, when even Isabel, the kindest, fondest of sisters, does not notice, at least not with alarm, though at times with some little uneasiness, what to a more experienced eye, are the unerring symptoms of a broken spirit.

Blanche shunning the family breakfast, and enjoying, as Mrs. Ashton thought, a great indulgence in having her tray sent up to her, Blanche is, after one cup of tea and one bit of toast, again in the field, where she used to walk so gaily with Trevor, and now paces so wildly with the Ghost of the Past.

And Isabel, whose kind heart would disdain all joy and all comfort for herself, if she knew how matters really were with her poor sister, she is gaily presiding at her mother's breakfast-table—where both are laying plans for the future, in which Blanche figures as gaily as any of them.

“ I wonder we have not heard from Penelope lately,” said Mrs. Ashton, “ I wish she would write more openly—I cannot make out from what she says, what her real feelings are—”

“ Oh !” replied Isabel, who saw everything through the rosy medium of her own happiness, “ I have no doubt, that in the close intimacy of domestic life, the *real* is prevailing, in Penelope’s heart, over the *false*. Mr. Addington is so genuine a character, and his love so earnest and so true, that he must make Bernard Brydges appear false, frippery, and frivolous in the extreme.

“ Bernard Brydges, too, had little charm, but that of his actual presence and engaging manners. I have heard Penelope own, in former times, when she has been angry with him, that his character did not blossom and expand in the garden of memory ; and now that she never sees him, and has so excellent a man, and so

devoted a lover ever by her side, I think she must, spite of herself, draw a comparison all in Mr. Addington's favour; and contrasting his constant devotion with Bernard's disappointing, beguiling, treacherous deceptions, her woman pride, and her woman heart must be enlisted on the side of the man she means to marry."

"Bernard's conduct certainly was odious to her," said Mrs. Ashton. "Oh! were I a girl, how I should glory in breaking his false, selfish, cruel heart."

"Ah! she had better content herself with healing her own, mamma; such hearts as Bernard Brydges's never break. I doubt whether, after the illusions of earliest youth, when every human creature does feel a passion for something—that it may know what disappointment is—I doubt whether, after that first inevitable influence, such hearts feel at all, except for themselves."

"No, perhaps not; but still I do wish

Penelope could, by any means, have lured him to propose, merely for the pride and glory of rejecting him."

"Ah! mamma, Penelope never would have rejected him—or, if she had, her whole life would have been one vain regret. He would have been enshrined in her memory as a martyr; now, I hope, he will take his proper place there, as the meanest of deceivers."

"You think, then, that she did love him very dearly."

"It is a painful subject, dear mamma, and a very delicate one; but, I fear, she did, indeed, love him with all her miserable ardent heart."

"Well, God grant they may never meet again, till, as Mrs. Addington of Oak Park, she nearly drives over him in her bridal carriage and four, or cuts him dead in a blaze of beauty and of brilliants, when he sidles up to her at some ball given in honour of her marriage."

Isabel smiled.

This might soothe a mother's pique ; but could it comfort a disappointed heart ?

“ And now, dear Isabel, I want to consult you about Blanche. It is a strange thing, but out of my three daughters, all so clever and so charming, you are the only one in whom I recognise myself. Blanche may be more like me in face, and Penelope in figure ; but in mind and heart, you, Isabel, take entirely after me.”

Isabel kissed her mother as if she thought this a compliment ; but in her frank, unworldly, and devoted heart, she did not recognise much of her dear, but somewhat worldly, vacillating, and ambitious mother.

“ Tell me, dearest, what do you think about Blanche ?—she grows very odd, and looks, at times, very ill.”

“ I fear she is fretting about Trevor Templeton,” said Isabel ; “ but, I trust,

causelessly. I do not think him, in any way, worthy of her."

"No, only, at best, likely to be a country Rector," said Mrs. Ashton.

"Oh! I did not mean that; competence and a country Rector, is a destiny good enough for any woman in our rank of life, mamma; and with true love at its hearth, the loftiest need desire no better home. I allude to his disposition, his mind, his heart."

"Well, but if Blanche loves him I suppose she is satisfied with them?"

"Yes, only I think she sees him in a false light."

"The purple light of love," laughed Mrs. Ashton. "Well, he shall not trifle with her feelings; he has paid her very marked attentions—won her first affections—caused a great deal of gossip about her—induced me to mention him to your aunt as her Intended; and, in fact, has

behaved in such a manner that unless he comes forward as soon as he has taken his degree, I shall insist on his declaring his intentions, and if he does not come forward I think a hint about 'Breach of promise' would be advisable. The idea of damages sometimes does wonders."

"Oh, mamma," said Isabel, starting up, pale and with tears in her eyes. "You could not so sacrifice Blanche's delicacy—Blanche's feelings! I am certain it would kill her, and were I in her place I could not survive such a proceeding. No, no! if he has been so base, so paltry, and so treacherous, let him go, and let us thank God she has escaped so vile a man; but do not offer your poor child's bleeding heart to be scoffed at by him, nor insult its misplaced devotion by any allusion to damages!"

"Ah, my Isabel, you are a novelist, and a poetess—that's all very fine, and romantic in a book; but a few thousands, and it

would make a very strong case in Sergeant ——'s hands, might heal even a wounded heart."

"Never! and oh, never may poor Blanche be placed in a position so humiliating that, to me, to be sold as a slave in a public mart would be less degrading than the suing a false wretch in an English Court of Law for the price of the heart he has broken and betrayed."

"Well, people of the world do not think so—Look at Miss Jinks! why with the damages she got from young Green she married Mr. Brown, and a very good match, too. Then both the Dashingtons got heavy damages, and are, I hear, engaged again; and these cases were trifling compared with Blanche's. I am sure the pains she took, and the hours she spent in helping him to get up the Articles for his examination, would go to the heart of the jury, and even the judge. Why here is a bill I have not yet paid, but am dreadfully dunned for,

of £2—10s., merely for books, keys, cribs, and I know not what, which Blanche used to pore over night and day, both by herself and with him, that he might pass—of course because he had convinced her that as soon as he did pass he should propose—else why should she care about his passing?”

“ Oh, if she loved him, she must care about a thing so essential to his comfort, credit, and honour.”

“ I don’t see that at all. I am sure were I in Blanche’s place, if I knew he meant to jilt me, I should rejoice in his being plucked; but then I was a girl of real spirit, and poor Blanche never had any proper sense of her own dignity.”

“ Well, Blanche and her prospects must be left, dear mamma, in better hands than ours. We could not add to her distress so effectually as by interfering. Her delicacy and her dignity must be sacred in our eyes at least—besides we do not know how it

may be yet. Trevor, I believe, goes up in the autumn, and of course we cannot expect him to propose till he has passed ; for unless he does pass he has nothing to offer."

" Well, I shall hold my hand awhile ; but I shall not let him off so easily as you, my love, in your romantic view would advise, if I see he has taken us all in—an odious, laughing, chattering, imposter—and to think I should have £2—10s. to pay for those odious books ! If he does jilt her he ought to pay ten-thousand pounds damages, or be imprisoned for life, and if I can manage it he shall, too."

These last words Mrs. Ashton did not mean to meet Isabel's ear ; and, as at that moment Mr. Percy Ashton was announced, the painful subject was dropped.

CHAPTER II

THE PROPOSAL.

MR. PERCY ASHTON approached in his usual quiet manner. His visit was so early a one that Mrs. Ashton immediately suspected something of importance had brought him to Kensington, at the time at which he generally breakfasted at his club; and Isabel remarked a flush on his pale cheek and a light in his grey eye, which convinced her that, whatever his business might prove to be, it was of a proud and pleasurable nature.

After a few old-fashioned compliments on the bright appearance of Mrs. Ashton and Isabel, in the morning after their successful little party of the evening before, Mr. Percy Ashton formally presented his letter to Mrs. Ashton, who read it with a heightened color, many exclamations of pride and pleasure, and a triumphant remark to her brother-in-law, that she was not so very bad a manœuverer after all."

"Of that I can judge better," said Mr. Percy Ashton, "when you inform me what is the success of which you are so proud—"

"Isabel will tell you that it is her affair, not mine," said Mrs. Ashton, putting both letters into her daughter's hand.

Isabel read them, Mr. Percy watched her closely, but so cunningly did he shade his keen eyes with his wan white hand, she did not know he was looking at her. Her mother on the contrary, expecting every moment to see her own surprise, delight,

and triumph reflected in her daughter's face, was amazed when the latter, growing gradually paler and paler, uttered a low moan, as of extreme pain—covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

“What is the matter, Isabel,” exclaimed Mrs. Ashton, rushing up to her, “surely the letter to you confirms what he says to me. He cannot be presuming to play any trick upon *us*—and she picked up the letter to Isabel, and eagerly perused it.

Mr. Percy understood, or thought he understood, what was quite an enigma to Mrs. Ashton—and at her request, read both letters, as if the whole matter were new to him.

“Very proper, and complimentary, and very honourable to all parties,” he said.

“Including even poor me,” said Mrs. Ashton, “I whose powers of manœuvring, you have always so despised brother, and who have yet, you see, managed pretty well for two of my girls.”

“You! why what have you had to do with it sister.”

“More than you might fancy; had not I contrived to make a sort of shoeing-horn of Sir Hector, I do not think his nephew ever would have proposed.”

“Oh, is that it,” said Mr. Percy, with a slight sneer, “you think the uncle’s attentions have brought the nephew to the point.”

“Certainly, and though at one time I almost hoped Sir Hector might have some intentions himself, yet when I consider the disparity of years, that sabre cut, his having but one arm, and the long time Captain Beresford has kept us in suspense, and made people doubt his meaning anything, I own I am glad that it has all ended in so excellent an offer from him. People cannot call it an interested match as he is so young, so handsome, so fashionable, and has been so long off and on as it were, and I have no doubt Isabel will gain

such influence with Sir Hector, that she will make him do just as she pleases; turn him quite round her little finger as the saying is; they will all live together perhaps, and if they do, Penelope, at Oak Park, will not have a more brilliant establishment or give more elegant entertainments than Isabel may, if Sir Hector unites his splendid income to that of the young couple."

"And what says Isabel to all this," asked Mr. Percy Ashton, approaching her, and taking her cold hand, "my love—he had never called her so before—nephew and uncle are already in Kensington Gardens, awaiting, with intense anxiety, the interview I have promised them in your name."

"I cannot see them uncle!" said Isabel.

"Not see them, you are mad!" cried Mrs. Ashton.

"You must see them my love, what fancy is this—there go to your desk and

write a line, of which I will be the bearer," said old Ashton, kindly.

He led her to her writing table.

Isabel sat down, seized her pen, and wrote.

"DEAR SIR,"

"I am quite at a loss to understand on what grounds either you or Sir Hector Loftus have presumed to anticipate my acceptance of your sudden, presumptuous, and most unexpected proposal. I cannot but feel surprised, and (forgive me) a little indignant, that your uncle and yourself should make so sure of affections you have never sought to secure, even by ordinary courtesy and attention, and could not, (so opposite are all our sentiments, habits, and feelings) have obtained even by the most assiduous devotion—since intimacy must have shewn us how

ill-suited we are to each other. I have no doubt, that as Sir Hector's heir, and with his liberal settlements, you will find one far worthier, eager to accept you—and sincerely hoping you may soon be consoled by her acceptance for my decided rejection,

“I am, sir,

“Yours faithfully,

“ISABEL ASHTON.”

Rapidly Isabel wrote, folded, and sealed her letter, and rapidly Mr. Percy Ashton glided away with it. Mrs. Ashton was gone to her own room to concoct her answer, determining that, at any rate, if there was any sort of lover's demur with Isabel, about a sudden proposal, after so much inconsistency, and as the vulgar call it, ‘shilly shallying,’ she would come, at any rate, forth as an endearing peace-maker,

and most desirable Mama-in-law. She felt certain it would all come right at last. Isabel could not refuse one she had once been so very partial to—so elegant, handsome, fashionable a guardsman—and in circumstances, (through his uncle's great liberality,) to marry directly, and ensure her every comfort and elegance of life.

The impatience of the uncle and nephew had brought them out of Kensington Gardens almost to the gate of Ashton Lodge.

Eagerly Captain Beresford seized his letter—more eagerly Sir Hector watched his countenance as he read it.

“Why, the girl's mad—my condescension has turned her head,” he cried, growing very pale, and gnashing his teeth. “Look here! she's fit only for Bedlam. I would not marry the little insane vixen, no, not if she had the wealth of Miss Burdett Coutts—but I could blow my brains out to think I was dolt, fool, ass

enough to propose, and give *her* the triumph of rejecting me."

"Nay," said Sir Hector, "I warned you. I thought you rash, presumptuous, imprudent, to make sure of such a girl, having never paid her any attentions, but such as by their inconsistency, wound and disappoint more than they flatter or win."

"Well, but," said Percy Ashton, "faint heart never won fair lady, Captain Beresford. Isabel is well worth a second trial. Some of the happiest men, I know, have been refused more than once—aye, more than twice, by women who have lived to dote on them afterwards. Perhaps she might not reject you again."

"No, sir ; my fear would be that she might accept me—and I should be very sorry, after the ineffable insolence of this letter, to give her the opportunity. May I beg you to present my respects to her, and tell her, that had I been a little more intimate with her, I should have agreed

with her, that we are perfectly unsuited to each other—I rejoice in my escape—and I shall certainly have the pleasure of cutting her if we should ever meet again. Come, uncle, I think we have had enough of Ashton Lodge for to-day.”

“ You have, certainly ; but I am not quite content to have seriously offended the loveliest, the most gifted and high-minded of her sex. I told you, that after slighting her as you had done, it was an insult to propose—and nothing but your extreme confidence in your power and her affection, could have induced me to risk her displeasure by lending myself to your scheme ; but sorry as I am for your highly merited mortifications, I admire her fifty times more for refusing you, than I should have done for accepting you ; indeed, as I told you, I should lower my opinion of the whole female world, if the woman, whom I consider its chief orna-

ment, had shown so poor and inconsistent a spirit."

"Well, let's have done with the odious subject, before it gets wind, and injures me beyond measure; I know what I'll do—I'll go at once and propose to Lord Lovel's sister, Lady Clarissa De Vere—she came out only last month—took a great fancy to me—is very unhappy at home; and if you, uncle, will do, in all respects, by me, in her case, as you would have done in Miss Ashton's, I will go at once and secure you a niece in many respects far more desirable."

"I thank you," said Sir Hector, haughtily, and with extreme disgust at the blind egotism and selfishness of this proposal. "But I would have made such sacrifices, sir, only in one case. I do not want a niece by any means; and I beg to inform you, that as Miss Isabel Ashton declines the honor of being your wife, it is my fixed purpose to marry—"

"You don't really mean to marry her?"

"I am not ass and coxcomb enough to *mean* to marry any woman of whose acceptance I am not at all sure."

"But do you mean to propose?"

"That is a question it is too great a liberty in you to ask, and too great a condescension in me to answer."

"Well, I suppose I shall know in due time; and if you do—"

"If I do—my only sister's only son will be no loser by any connection I may form—I mean as to reasonable expectations—and what I had meant to do before Isabel was in question at all."

"But of course I cannot consider myself your heir, Sir Hector, if you really intend to marry."

"Why, no, that would be very rash and unwise," said Sir Hector, with a smile; "but meet me at the United Service Club at six—I will there tell you what

my own plans are—and what is more interesting to you, you shall know what I intend doing for you.”

So saying, Sir Hector left his nephew, and joined Mr. Percy Ashton, who had strolled on to some distance.

“I hope to Heaven the little vixen will refuse him, too,” muttered Captain Beresford ; “it is quite evident to me he means to propose. What a fool I’ve been—if I’d made up my mind a month, aye, a year ago, she’d have accepted me with rapture. It’s the success of her book, and the devotion of a lover of the old school, have done for me. Well, there’s still a chance she may refuse him ; and now I must go and trump up a tale of my own, before this gets blown, and makes me the laugh of the town. I could cut off my right hand for having written the obsequious folly she can now shew to every idle woman who has felt honored by my slightest notice, or stung by my scorn, and who will

rejoice in this, to me, most stinging, odious failure ; but I mustn't think of it, or I shall be only fit for St. Luke's. I'll go and write a chapter on woman in my new work, and vent a little of my venom on the sex !²⁹

CHAPTER III.

WOMAN'S LOVE.

SIR HECTOR LOFTUS took Mr. Percy Ashton's arm ; they turned towards Ashton Lodge.

“ And so she is very angry ? ”

“ Oh, very ! ”

“ Tell me how she looked—what she said—what she did ? ”

“ She turned very pale—hid her face in her hands—and burst into tears.”

“ Good God, you don’t say so ! Could I see her, think you ? ”

“ She seems quite as angry with you as with him.”

“ Where did you leave her ? ”

“ Alone in the drawing-room Her mother is writing, up-stairs, something very touching and conciliatory, I presume, believing Isabel will, after asserting her dignity, and holding out a certain time, in resentment of a confidence so little flattering to a proud and delicate mind, be induced to forgive Beresford—and name the day.”

“ And what think you, Mr. Percy Ashton ? ”

“ That there is more in all this than any one knows, except her own heart.”

“ Percy Ashton ! you could do me the greatest of kindnesses, nay, of mercies,—if she is still alone in the drawing-room, let me be with her a few moments—It may be unceremonious ; it may seem informal ; but I have so much at stake—just open

the door and let me steal to her lovely side ; or, if she has left the room, induce her to see me, if only for five minutes. I cannot exist under the sense of her displeasure."

"My dear, noble, generous friend," said Percy Ashton, "I think you will very easily make your peace with her. However I will ascertain where she is ; wait you a moment here and he opened the dining-room door.

Isabel was still sitting where her uncle had left her, her face buried in her hands, which lay on the desk before her ; she was evidently sobbing as Mr. Percy Ashton saw by her heaving bosom—absorbed by her grief, she did not notice him, as he looked in upon her from the back drawing-room, whose door was ajar ; gently he stole down stairs, noiselessly he ushered in Sir Hector Loftus, and left him alone with Isabel.

Sir Hector stole to her side ; knelt by her, passed his one brave arm round her

waist ; rested his martial brow on her arm, and said ‘ Isabel,’ why are you angry with me? How have I offended you, whom I would die to please ?”

Isabel started from her seat, tore her arm from his grasp, and said “Pray forbear making professions of a regard your conduct so entirely belies ; if you think me so mean a thing that any worldly advantages would induce me to marry such a man as Captain Beresford—your professions of esteem are a cruel mockery, and one I am not inclined to listen to ; you know what your nephew’s feelings, sentiments and opinions are—You know what his behaviour to me has been ; and if, knowing all this, you can think him worthy of me, and believe me to be base enough to accept him, if you can make great sacrifices to ensure my becoming his wife ; why then Sir Hector, dear, as alas, your friendship, and—and—no matter, I am deceived in you, and all that remains to me now, is to say ‘ farewell for ever.’”

“ Isabel !” said Sir Hector gravely, so gravely,—nay so sternly, that hearing his voice thus, for the first time, Isabel looked up, startled, and trembling —“ Isabel you are very ready to say farewell for ever, to a friend whose whole heart is yours, and whose whole life would be gladly devoted to you—listen Isabel ! the sacrifice I was willing to make in case your feelings permitted you to accept it, was far, far greater than you, in your bright, hopeful and happy heart, can appreciate or understand—I love you Isabel, have loved you as your woman instinct must have told you, from the first moment I met your frank eyes and heard your dear voice ; but I was brought here by one who thought he had made some impression on your heart ; who had, nay, never start and blush dearest, certainly at one time pleased your fancy ; so confident did his vanity make him, backed up as it was by good looks—a fine form—*boudoir* renown, literary repute, and all

that women prize, that he assured me his acceptance was certain."

"And could *you* believe it? You who know me so well, you who are aware that I look only to the heart, the mind; that if I ever did indulge a girlish fancy for Captain Beresford, as I have even confessed to you I once did, his own inconsistency and fits of contempt and indifference had roused kindred feelings in me—that you should advocate so warmly my union with him—"

"Isabel my heart never, never, advocated it at all; but I know a first fancy goes far, and woman is a strange inscrutable being; and he is so rich in youth and beauty and was so confident that you loved him—and I so dreaded to listen to the prompting of my own heart, knowing how selfish it is—and that it is as a shrine of which Isabel is the idol—and I did tell him he had no chance—that you would despise his presumption and punish his insolence—and then he taunted me with loving

you myself—And conscience convicted, aye, convicted me before him—bear with me Isabel! Jealous, suspicious, but adoring you, I did resolve to facilitate in every way your union with him, in the to me appalling, case of such a union being welcome to you.”

“ But if first impressions had worn off—if his matchless beauty of face and form—his well assorted years—fashionable air and thousand advantages did not in your eyes redeem his want of lofty feeling and devoted love—then Isabel I meant to offer you—‘how great a contrast to this brilliant picture’—a middle-aged and mutilated man—whose only claims on your favor are a heart that adores you, a mind capable of appreciating yours, and a soul which he hopes is so far kindred with yours, that, this troublesome life over, it might share with yours a blissful eternity—Oh! Isabel, can you refuse the young, the brilliant

Beresford, and accept such a wreck as I am?"

For all, answer Isabel sank on her knees beside him—They had been sitting together before—her head sunk on his shoulder tears flowed fast.

"Isabel, my darling, can it be, do you, can you love me?"

"I love you, Hector, with all my heart, and have so loved you from our first meeting."

"And you will be my wife—"

"Your wife! how gladly, how proudly, Hector—and oh, may God make me worthy of the happiness which seems so great I tremble to think it is mine; for so rich a treasure how can I deserve it?"

"Angel!" murmured Sir Hector, as he raised her to his heart, and hearing approaching footsteps, placed her in a chair.

Mr. Percy Ashton, who thought the interview had lasted long enough, and who

was very curious as to the result, now entered the room; Sir Hector eagerly announced his happiness, and a cordial shake of the hand conveyed Mr. Percy Ashton's congratulations—in France it would have been along embrace between '*les messieurs*'—The uncle proudly kissed his happy niece, and Mrs. Ashton, coming in with her letter to Captain Beresford as her Son-in-law Elect, was just as well pleased to receive Sir Hector in that capacity, and taking Mr. Percy Ashton aside, whispered to him—

“It is all my doing. So I am not such a bad manager after all.”

Beresford, and accept such a wreck as I am?"

For all, answer Isabel sank on her knees beside him—They had been sitting together before—her head sunk on his shoulder tears flowed fast.

"Isabel, my darling, can it be, do you, can you love me?"

"I love you, Hector, with all my heart, and have so loved you from our first meeting."

"And you will be my wife—"

"Your wife! how gladly, how proudly, Hector—and oh, may God make me worthy of the happiness which seems so great I tremble to think it is mine; for so rich a treasure how can I deserve it?"

"Angel!" murmured Sir Hector, as he raised her to his heart, and hearing approaching footsteps, placed her in a chair.

Mr. Percy Ashton, who thought the interview had lasted long enough, and who

was very curious as to the result, now entered the room; Sir Hector eagerly announced his happiness, and a cordial shake of the hand conveyed Mr. Percy Ashton's congratulations—in France it would have been along embrace between '*les messieurs*'—The uncle proudly kissed his happy niece, and Mrs. Ashton, coming in with her letter to Captain Beresford as her Son-in-law Elect, was just as well pleased to receive Sir Hector in that capacity, and taking Mr. Percy Ashton aside, whispered to him—

“It is all my doing. So I am not such a bad manager after all.”

guilty heart and burning cheek, to alight and enter the shop.

Beautiful at all times, but ‘beautiful exceedingly’ in the emotion caused by *his* presence, an emotion so flattering, too, to so a vain an idler, Bernard, pale and trembling, and a real tear moistening his eyes, pressed her cold hand, and even he, failing in assuming a cheerful unconcern of manner before the lynx-eyed mistress of the shop, led her into the inner and darker room. New idlers, who came in to eat, because they had nothing else to do, engrossed the mistress and the waiters, and the Bride-Elect of Mr. Addington dared to listen to a false tale of love and misery from Bernard Brydges, and to reveal the hoarded tenderness and restless anguish of her own heart to the false one, who flattered as he was by the devotion of one so beautiful, was ever and anon glancing at the clock, (he did not dare take out his

watch) for this inconvenient but beguiling interview was infringing on a time appropriated to a rendezvous of immense importance to Mr. Bernard Brydges's interests. His best interests, as he considered them—seeing Penelope still sitting apparently lost in painful thought—for tears were stealing through the fingers she had clasped before her eyes, and in a positive fidget to get away without any flagrant scene. He said—

“I must leave you now, and bear my breaking heart, where an important and solemn duty calls me. Farewell, may God bless you, may God in Heaven bless you.”

These curses of womankind are ever very fervent in their benedictions.

“Bless *me!* God bless *me* Bernard?” cried Penelope, wildly siezing his hand, “oh, you cannot mean *that*, you must feel that I am of women the most blighted, the most accursed.”

“Hush, dearest ! hush, for Heaven’s sake ! I saw that odious woman peeping through her little pink curtain. You will ruin me.”

“Bernard what am I to do. I cannot bear this misery !” From the wildness of her tone and manner, Bernard dreading some *exposé*, the result of which he could not at all foresee, but greatly wished to escape, thought it best to compromise a little, so he said “We must consider what is to be done !”

“When shall I see you again ?”

“I will write to you. But we shall meet again.”

“Of course—only I shall quite dread you if you are so ungoverned ; we are placed in such delicate and peculiar circumstances—you as the affianced of another, and I on the point of—”

“Of what ?”

“Of arrest,” whispered Bernard.

“Of arrest ! Thank Heaven !” said

Penelope, with a sigh of relief. She had feared, for a moment, he meant on the point of marriage.

“But arrest is a very serious matter to a man so frightfully involved as I am; and, in short, whatever my heart might impel me to do—whatever selfish sacrifice I might consent to your making—Ah, it has struck three!—loveliest! dearest! best—I will write to you. Compose yourself; and remember, any imprudence in you may involve me in a duel—a matter of no consequence to me, since to die for you would, to me, be bliss—but I must think of your position if I fell. Angel! I must protect you from yourself—God bless you.”

He was gone!—and Penelope must go too. She must go back to the home of the good and generous man, who so loved—so trusted her! Go still as his Bride-Elect, while her very soul is full of another. Her restless spirit and half frenzied brain urging her to rush wildly about, and weep

and groan—aye, almost shriek in her passionate love, and torturing self-reproach. She must sit quietly down in the venerable presence of the mother of him her heart had so cruelly wronged, her damp and trembling fingers weaving some light web, while those relentless Destinies—Falsehood, Passion, and Despair, were weaving that dark tissue—the fate of a false one—and while she is enduring this quiet martyrdom—smiling with a nest of scorpions in her bosom—he, for whom all this is suffered, he has gaily presented himself at the dancing academy of Monsieur Le Comte de la Pirouette, where Dora Addington, dressed like a Columbine, and blushing and panting like a maiden in her teens, has been anxiously expecting him for that eternity to those in love—half an hour!

This was not one of the public *Matinées dansantes*—For they were called *Matinées* though they did not begin till noon, and

often only ended in time for the *Soirée dansante* to begin.

Dora Addington had formed a great friendship, not merely for Monsieur Le Comte de la Pirouette, who had convinced her that she was a “*charmante petite blonde, faite a croquer*,” but for the Comtesse de La Pirouette, a large, dark, masculine person, priding herself on being an *esprit fort*--“A strong-minded woman,” in short and always when in doors, appearing in the costume of a Bloomer; this costume was also adopted by her niece, a very pretty girl, who assisted in teaching the junior pupils. And La Comtesse de la Pirouette, was doing all she could to induce Dora to adopt a style of dress which she thought all women of spirit ought to be eager to assume.

Madame La Comtesse was an English-woman; her real history was not known, but from some mysterious hints she gave Dora, there was noble, aye, even royal blood in her veins.

Her influence over Dora was very great, and she seemed to have supreme dominion too, over the volatile Count and all the establishment. She was very tall—and being a great *bon-vivant* extremely corpulent—she wore her black hair in a Brutus' crop, declaring that women should not encourage the growth of long silken tresses, as they only formed chains wherewith they were themselves enslaved. A regular shirt, buff waistcoat, colored tie, green cut-a-way with basket buttons, nankeen "pants," Hessian boots, and a black cloth tunic, not reaching to the knee, this was her in-door costume ; but as she had been more than once mobbed and insulted in attempting to parade it abroad, she had been obliged *pour la promenade* to adopt a large sort of cloth pelisse, not very unlike a great coat, in which the Bloomer not being detected, she passed unchallenged. Monsieur le Comte de la Pirouette had, or professed to have a respect amounting

almost to reverence for the intellect of his Countess, she managed all the affairs, which at one time very disastrous, began now, owing to the brilliant success of the *soirees and matinées dansantes* to se redresser un peu as the Comte said, and to be very flourishing indeed, as Madame had the pleasure of knowing by the state of her coffers.

A treatise on dancing, considered physically, scientifically and philosophically, by Thomasine Comtesse de la Pirouette, was one source of profit of which the fair authoress eagerly availed herself. It was got up in the cheapest possible style, but sold at five shillings a copy—every pupil was expected to take at least one—and some hideous photographic likenesses of the Comte and Comtesse de la Pirouette, were also eagerly circulated at a highly remunerative price. But a grand source of profit was about to be opened, though as yet it figured only in the active and teeming

brain of this energetic but repulsive character. This was nothing less than a grand series of public lectures on "Bloomerism," futile, puerile and disgusting absurdity which was just beginning to take a sort of hold of the vulgar mind in general.

How alarmed would the dignified Mrs. Addington have been had she known what questionable intimacies Dora was forming ; but Dora, like all weak and cowardly characters, was extremely sly, and Mrs. Addington, like all mothers, who having more than one child, is yet wrapped up only in one, is about to reap the better fruits of partiality and injustice in finding her daughter's spurned and slighted affections, fasten themselves on objects which however unworthy in themselves, have, at least not repulsed and not rejected her, but sympathised with and courted her for their own mean and private objects ; certainly ; but how is the poor, blind, self-taught, slighted Dora, to discover why any

one seems to care for or to love her? N one has ever taken any pains with her, the only object has been to save her fortune from the interested, not her heart from ruin and her life from the long desolation of the unloved. Hannah who has contrived all this, is very proud of her secret, she has always been in reality, looking on with indignation at the utter indifference to her young mistress's prospects, (she was her young mistress at first) and entire devotion to her young master's, which Mrs. Addington did not even attempt to conceal. Hannah was enraptured at the prospect of outwitting them all—at the change which to her, was so exciting and so brilliant a one—from moping at home to all these drives to Brighton—gay shop-pings—dancing meetings above and below stairs—for the servants who escorted the pupils soon got up polkas and mazurkas in the kitchen—and above all, the delightful conviction that the Ensign was at last

forgotten, that the handsome young man always dancing with Miss Dora, whenever she, with any other maids, peeped in at the '*soirées dansantes*,' was, in her own language, 'Mr. Wright come at last ;' and that, in all probability, there would be a regular wedding, or, perhaps, better still, an elopement by moonlight—and that, perhaps, while Miss Dora and Mr. Wright might were inside the chariot and four, there be a handsome young footman in the rumble with her. Oh! Hannah would keep every thing close, and only longed for the day when she would see the last of the moping place where all her best years had been wasted away, and poor Miss Dora's too.

CHAPTER V.

BERNARD BRYDGES had a very difficult part to play. He had ascertained, to a fraction, the full amount of Dora's large fortune, and he was quite resolved, not only upon marrying her, but upon *eloping* with her, so that no opportunity should be afforded to impertinent relatives, to baffle him by settlements, separate purse, and pin-money.

Luckily for him, the very loving are very blind, and both the women he was deceiving were, in their own peculiar way, of the very loving. Of the nature of Penelope's love, the reader is aware. It was the first love of an ardent imagination, and passionate but ill-regulated heart; and Dora's love—poor, weak, silly creature as she was—was fast becoming, to Mr. Bernard Brydges, a very inconvenient degree of intensity, and was very exacting in its nature. It was the same love with which, at fifteen, she had loved her immortal ensign—for her heart had known no other passion till Bernard appeared—it was the love of a child in experience, though a middle-aged woman in years; and Bernard felt it to be so ridiculous, that he longed to have, in matrimony, an excuse for not even appearing to tolerate it.

The *soirées* and *matinées dansantes* went on, and, at them, Dora and Bernard

continued to meet. Penelope waited in unspeakable anguish for the promised letter, and as it did not come, she was every day at Brighton, particularly at the confectioner's, in the hope that Bernard would be there to look for her. She little knew, that of all places in the world, he most dreaded and shunned that very confectioner's; and often well aware that she was there, purposely to avoid her, rode to Addington House, to exchange a few words with Dora, through the hedge at the back of the grounds, and thus keep up, in her mind, the impression of his watchful and romantic love.

All this while business of great importance kept Mr. Addington in London—where, to console himself, for a delay so grievous to him, he took the opportunity of getting every thing forward that could facilitate his marriage. He had called at Ashton Lodge, where the news of Isabel's engagement to Sir Hector had been

triumphantly confided to him by Mrs. Ashton ; and when he saw, in the affianced of Penelope's brilliant and youngest sister, a man, not only older than himself, but with only one arm, and with a scar across his forehead—he comforted his honest heart a good deal about the disparity in years and looks between himself and Penelope—actually walked to the pier-glass with a sort of satisfaction, and gloried in his unscarred forehead, and his two long, powerful and useful arms.

He was in such very high spirits that Mrs. Ashton felt convinced everything *must* be going on most satisfactorily between Penelope and himself. She pressed him to dine at Ashton Lodge ; but as he had promised to devote the evening to his partner and business, (business which must be settled before he could fly to Penelope,) and which would yet require many days of close attention he courageously declined.

As Sir Hector and Isabel, Mr. Addington and Mrs. Ashton stood together in front of a large glass which reflected them from head to foot, she could not help thinking how little she, a very pretty, young looking, and elegant woman of eight and forty seemed fitted to be the mother-in-law of the veteran Sir Hector and the staid banker, Addington. She could not, however, refrain from saying—

“Look what a pretty family group we form. We only want dearest Penelope to make the picture complete ! And I, just to make up the two pairs of happy lovers, will take her place for a moment.”

And she passed her hand through Mr. Addington's arm, and looked smilingly up in his face.

“There now, you must make allowance for my being about twenty years too old !” she said.

“I was just thinking,” said Mr. Ad-

dington, with bitter truth, "how much more suitable in years you were to such a staid old fellow as I see I really am!"

"There," laughed Mrs. Ashton, "now does not that amount almost to a proposal to me. How jealous Penelope would be—I shall write and tell her you want to jilt her and make up to me—I declare we should not make an ugly couple! look Isabel! look Sir Hector!" and she took her lace scarf from her shoulders, and threw it over her head as a bridal veil; "look Mr. Addington."

But Sir Hector had shrunk away, not liking the contrast thus forced upon his notice, of Isabel's nineteen summers, and his fifty winters, his scarred, bronzed brow, and her satin-like complexion, his mutilated form, and her beautiful figure; and Isabel had drawn back too—clinging the more fondly to him the while—for she felt for him most deeply.

As to Mr. Addington, in spite of what he had said, Mrs. Ashton's remark had stung him to the quick—that picture of Penelope's mother in a bridal veil leaning on his arm, and looking up in his face with an assumed tenderness and playful coquetry, haunted him with a detestable pertinacity even as he bustled through the city elbowing its busy thousands, and sate with his partner—both on high stools—in the awful presence of thick banking books, and of those magic characters L. S. D.

“ Oh, she is too young, too lovely, too exquisite for me!” he thought again and again. “ Can she love me?—but then, Isabel, younger still, evidently dotes on Sir Hector, (who is my senior) and glories in his love—Yes, in spite of that deep scar and his one arm.”

And he passed his hand across his smooth brow, hugged himself with his two long arms, and tried to be comforted.

Meanwhile Dora, who could scarcely bear

her existence when not in the presence of her idolised Bernard, and who, urged on by Hannah, was resolved to assert herself, and receive him at her own house—determined that he should present himself there.

She had quite made up her mind to marry him, directly he proposed to her; and this blissful moment she felt sure was fast approaching. She of course would prefer to be wooed and won in form—regularly courted—asked and given away—with all the magic accompaniments of bridal cards and cake, kid gloves, silver fringe, orange-flowers, white satin and Brussels lace; but if, when he was introduced to her mother and brother—before he had formally come forward as her suitor—she perceived that there would be no hope of her mother's sanction, and her brother's consent, then rather than rouse them to watch, and perhaps outwit her, and provoke her brother to a positive refusal, which she knew by her father's will would have an

influence on her fortune, which she wisely concealed from Bernard Brydges—then she was determined to elope with him ; and moonlight-mystery—and the romance of the affair must atone for want of bridesmaids in white tarlatan, the bridal costume for herself, and the wedding banquet.

But it was very, very difficult to get Bernard Brydges to the house. How could he present himself as the admirer of Dora in the presence of Penelope Ashton !

Still excuses availed him not; backed by Hannah, Dora grew resolute. She had discovered that they had a mutual friend in London, a Miss Martinet—a maiden lady living in Cavendish Square, and she insisted on his getting a letter of introduction to her mother and brother, mentioning him as a particular friend who, intending to pass sometime at Brighton, she wished to make known to them.

Bernard Brydges had quite influence enough with Miss Martinet to obtain this

letter. Indeed, he was an especial favourite of hers. She was at heart a match-maker, hated the Ashtons who had refused to attend her parties—knew of Penelope's attachment for Bernard Brydges, and desired nothing more than to secure one of the few beaux, who made themselves agreeable at her house, such a prize in the matrimonial lottery as Miss Addington.

Urged by Dora—anxious to bring matters to an issue—trusting to his good luck in such matters, and fancying he saw how he might hood-wink Penelope, and lighten the *ennui* of Dora's society by the luxury of hers, Bernard Brydges resolved to obtain the introduction; but first he wrote a few lines, which he instructed a groom to give to Miss Ashton as soon as she alighted at the confectioner's.

With guilty, and trembling joy, Penelope seized the note, and hurried with it into the little inner-room. It contained these words :

“ I have been ill, almost unto death, my brain on fire, my heart broken, my reason all but gone ! else you would have heard from me—The conflict is over—I cannot resign the luxury of your society any longer, nor yet can I forfeit my honour and give myself up to imprisonment for life—There is a middle course ; we can see each other ; we can furtively, and by delicious snatches, consult together what can yet be done—for your sake I can conceal the weakness of my heart and seem to take pleasure in others—can you for my sake Penelope, play your part too ! Be to the world what you now are, at least for the present, *his* Bride Elect. Knowing that you are to me, the Eve, whether of the Paradise or of the wilderness, is as yet unrevealed—If you can wear a mask and wear it well, you will see me at Addington House, see me I hope a frequent, an honoured, a welcome guest—if you *cannot*, to-morrow. I sail for Australia, where I go in search of—Death!—I shall see you

for one moment after you have perused this, and one word 'yes' or 'no,' decides my fate." B. B—

As she was hurrying the letter into her bosom, Bernard approached her. He took his note from her cold and trembling hand, she tried to retain it but could not—

"What is your answer Penelope, do you love me well enough to do as I desire?"

"Oh! Bernard, how can I play so false, so double, so odious a part?"

"You decline, thank you for undeceiving me—I shall go with a lighter heart since I see there is no real misery or real love, (it is the same thing) in yours—Farewell Penelope! Farewell for ever."

"No! no! no!—I cannot bear it, I will do as you wish, as your dictate."

"Poor child, it does love him then very dearly!" said Bernard, "to-morrow you will see me at Addington House, and whatever I may seem to do, remember I adore you still," and thus they parted—

CHAPTER VI.

THE WEDDING.

BUT the destinies are weaving a golden thread in the web of Isabel's destiny, though her love for Sir Hector is to be put to a severe and sudden test. For his sake she is called upon to leave mother, sisters, country ; old habits must be cast aside, old associations broken up ; the dear family affection of a life must give way to this new tie ; yes, forsaking all others she must

cleave only to him. A brilliant appointment in India has been offered him, as his Queen and his Country require his services; and it is intimated to him that no other could supply his place, no other, uniting his long experience—high renown—fame as a soldier, personal influence and local knowledge of the important empire he is called upon to govern—Sir Hector feels he has no choice, but he recognises in Isabel a right to choose. “When I asked you to be mine,” he said, and the brave man trembled as he watched her uplifted face—“We spoke of a happy family circle, of your dear mother by our fire-side, sweet Blanche sharing our happy wanderings—Penelope herself a bride with her kind husband emulating us in attentions to those dear ones and in domestic bliss—Now if you marry me it must be at once, to go alone with me, across the sea you dread, to a country you may not like. Blanche, whom I would gladly ask to ac-

company you, is far too delicate for India, and your mother could not spare her in any case, even if her heart would let her go in peace. So if you come, I must supply the place of all, mother, sisters, home, country. Isabel I can hardly expect this of you”—

“I have asked my heart—solemnly I have asked it—solemnly has it answered—It is painful to me I own to leave all I have loved so long—but it is impossible to me to let you go alone—My Eden is your presence—why should I doom myself to the wilderness the world would be without you.—My dear, dear mother, my poor, delicate Blanche, they are very dear to me; but at heart I am already a wife, and my place henceforth, is by your side—How could I live through stormy nights when I knew you were at sea—How think of battle and of bloodshed and not be near to know you safe.”

Sir Hector, brave veteran as he was, felt the tears rush to his eyes, while they

streamed from Isabel's ; and as she hid her face on his shoulder, and wept till she was calm, he felt that he had never known happiness, till he knew true love; and registered a vow to be to her all man can be to woman, friend, lover, husband, all in one.

Mrs. Ashton wept and laughed by turns! wept at losing Isabel, but laughed at the idea of a wedding ; so sudden and so grand a match, and no time for any great display—scarcely could the *trousseau* be hastily prepared—

However, Sir Hector and Isabel wished the marriage to be as private as possible ; Penelope must come from Brighton, and Mr. Addington must be asked—Captain Beresford was in Paris—Mr. Percy Ashton was in raptures ; he was to give the bride away—there was no grand *déjeûner*, no wedding party. Blanche and Penelope were bridesmaids. Mr. Addington, seeing Sir Hector married, was filled with new anxiety for his own wedding—and Penelope's very

soul, sickened at his furtive caresses and exulting anticipations—

Isabel like an April morning, was half smiles, half tears—but happiness, confidence, and love dawned in her eyes as she proudly raised them to him she loved so well and gloried so in loving.

The family breakfast was over—"the knot there's no untying," was tied—Sir Hector, Mr. Percy Ashton, Mr. Addington, and the Dean of—who had performed the ceremony, have pledged each other again and again, in iced champagne and sparkling moselle—and have made speeches and are grown merry—

The bride has changed her dress—the travelling chariot and four is at the gates—the favors flutter in the sunny breeze—Sir Hector's valet and Isabel's new maid are in the rumble—the last tears are shed and the last farewells breathed—and they are gone—gone on that long journey of which the goal is the grave—gone for an

indissoluble partnership of joy, or sorrow; but love is in their hearts, and truth in their souls—a blessing on them—they *must* be happy.

Blanche in a high, but unsuspected fever, had looked bright and gay till Isabel and Sir Hector were gone—when she suddenly fell on the floor in a syncope, which lasted so long, that fears were entertained lest consciousness should never return. It did poor wretch, and all too soon for her. She was ordered to bed, and Penelope pale, cold, irritable, vexed with herself, and with her, alas! to her odious but most loving Intended, gladly availed herself of the excuse of nursing Blanche to escape from the devotion of Mr. Addington—However this was not so easy now. Having ascertained from a maid servant that Blanche was in bed and asleep, Mr. Addington fortified by champagne; more in love than ever, and full of emulation of the tenderness he had witnessed in the newly

married pair—Mr. Addington,—privileged intruder as he now thought himself, and welcome too as he believed himself, (alas ! poor fool), gently ascended the stairs, and noiselessly entered the little ante-room of Blanche's apartment.

Penelope did not see him, she did not hear him—she was kneeling by a sofa behind the door, her face buried in the cushions, weeping, oh, how bitterly !—with a shudder, she felt an arm passed round her, Mr. Addington's face was bent down close to hers, his breath on her cheek, his voice in her ear; anger, which she dared not betray, filled her miserable heart, as he raised her, took her in his arms, and kissed away her fast flowing tears.

“Do not weep so bitterly, my love,” he said, “our turn will soon come, and in the meantime there is no one in the drawing-room—Come and lie on the sofa there, and I will sit beside you, and nurse you, my darling, and tell you all the thousand things

I have thought since I saw you and all the thousand things I have planned and done to make you happy—Come there's his own sweet little wife—with two strong arms to carry her in comfort and triumph through life ; not like that poor, dear, mutilated fellow, whom Isabel is so proud and so fond of," and as he spoke he caught Penelope in his arms and carried her down stairs.

Unutterable was the mortification, the anger, and the shame Penelope felt, but dared not betray. And oh, how intolerable, and how multiplied, are the miseries of this kind, which a woman entails on herself by pretending an affection she does not feel, and accepting a man she loathes instead of loves!

She may be angry, she may be sullen ; but she dares not be consistently repulsive. A horrid sense of consistency, and of the force of circumstances chain her down to endure the attentions and caresses which would be so dear, and so welcome were she

not a mere deceiver. Having pretended, out of interest, ambition, cupidity, or expediency, to share that love which the honest, devoted victim of her treachery thinks will be so welcome in its warm and earnest outpourings, these traitresses seem to themselves, and are painted by some writers as lovely, interesting martyrs, heroines, self-sacrificers. The real martyr is the honest-hearted, duped, deceived lover, who will find too late that his idol was clay. And that the love, which, when reciprocal, is so holy, and so sweet, must have been to the cold deceiver, whom he knows at last too well, the most puerile of follies, and the most unbearable of bores.

Penelope dared not refuse to lie on the sofa where her affianced placed her, and when he knelt beside her, and laid his head on the same cushion, and called her his sweet wife, and smiled in a confidence and love almost maddening to her, she did not dare betray the irritation, and almost vin'

dictive wrath of her heart. She shrank away as much as she could ; but she did not dare withdraw her hand, for had not Bernard insisted on her playing this odious part, and was she not the Bride-Elect ; and what cause of offence had George given her, or what quarrel could she contrive to get up with him just to be free from him for an hour ?

Wretched Penelope ! she was indeed to be pitied ; for the guilty, who suffer, are surely far more pitiable than the innocent who can look within, and find comfort.

There is none for her there, and when, fretted at his fondness, and longing to find fault with it, and tax it as exacting and improper, conscience asked her heart whether she would have resented such devotion were Bernard the suitor kneeling beside her, heart and conscience both answered in the negative, and she resigned her cold hand to his, and dared not even raise her shame-bowed head from the manly banker's,

or rather *bankrupt's*, breast on which he had placed it. And oh, how angry, how mortified, how vindictive did she feel when Mrs. Ashton, looking in, and seeing such lover-like proceedings, laughed a little triumphant laugh, and said—

“ Oh, I see I'm Madame de Trop ; but never mind, I'm not going to stay—only I want a book that's under that pillow, you two naughty fond pets are leaning on—Come, come, I can't allow all this just yet. The sooner we have another wedding the better—dull as weddings are to my thinking, exactly like funerals—There, my dears, I've got my book ; now I'm going. Good bye till dinner. Now be very good, and take care of each other ; and don't be envious of Isabel, my sweet Pen. You'll very soon be a bride yourself, and dash away as gaily as she did, my darling.”

“ Give me a kiss, dear mamma !” said Addington, calling her so for the first time, and trying to embrace mother and daughter

at once; but poor Addington was beside himself with happiness, and Penelope, who could bear this penance no longer, started up—said something about the heat, a head-ache, her bonnet, and a little walk; rushed out of the room, and the lover, the tears in his eyes, exclaimed—

“Oh, mamma, you’ve frightened her away—and she was *so* kind, and we were *so* happy!”

CHAPTER VII

THE Dean of C—— had hastened away directly “the happy pair,” were fairly off, and Mr. Percy Ashton, not knowing how to amuse himself at Ashton Lodge, had hurried off to his club to while away the long hours till Mrs. Ashton’s seven o’clock dinner.

Blanche still slept or appeared to sleep, and Penelope, who felt half-suffocated with

contending emotions was in the garden. Not long however was she allowed to indulge in the luxury of solitude (if solitude can be a luxury, while the awakened conscience whispers in the startled ear.)

Soon, how soon she saw, Mr. Addington in search of her—soon, how soon, he was by her side—such provoking satisfaction, such intolerable, almost bridal joy in his face—so fond, so confident, so communicative, and as the French so graphically call it so *demonstratif*; and persisting in attributing her dejection, and her cold languor to annoyance at the inevitable delay, called into life by the sight of Isabel's happy wedding.

Then had she to listen to all his plans for accelerating what, to her, was not the wedding of love but the funeral of hope—a day more terrible to her than the day of doom itself, and yet she dared not even damp his ardor by one dissentient word; for one word would awaken suspicion, set

fire to a train, in which might be consumed, not merely her poor devoted Addington's sanguine heart, not merely her own grand and miserable prospects—her mother's hopes, her sister's comfort, but Bernard—Bernard, whose mysterious diplomacy she did not understand, but who had terrified her into entire compliance with his tortuous and selfish policy.

“We will take poor Blanche on our wedding tour, my love, at least, after one week or two, if you prefer it,” and he smiled, “we will send for your poor sister, and give her the benefit of the change of air and scene.”

Penelope did not speak, her eyes filled with tears.

“Nay, darling, not unless you like it;” and his heart beat high, “if you prefer being alone with me, my angel, I will contrive something else—your mother and sister shall have a little trip and go to Baden

Baden or some such place as my guests, and we will frank them darling, shall we? for with these two weddings mamma's coffers will be getting very low—and she wont mind a little compliment from her son, or rather from you, sweetest! and we will give them a *rendez-vous*, at Baden; how delightful that will be!”

Penelope burst into tears.

“Not unless you like it my love—but I only mean when the honey-moon is over.”

“When the honey-moon is over—” repeated Penelope, with a shudder,

“The conventional honey-moon, my darling, the honey-moon in our hearts will last as long as those hearts have pulses to respond to each other.”

Penelope felt faint, sick, hysterical, her eyes closed, her arms dropped, her head sunk on Mr. Addington's shoulder.

“You are ill, my love! my bride! my wife! this exciting day has been too much for you, poor, poor pet!” and he supported

her with his arm, and kissed her cold pale face.

At his kiss she roused herself, and tried to raise her head.

“No, no, rest there my sweetest, my loveliest, my own! it is your pillow for ever! and, darling, you know the plan was that we were to return to my mother to-morrow, and go with Dora and this new flame of hers—this friend of Miss Martinet and quondam, but I believe rejected, suitor of my Pen’s, to the B—— ball; but you are so poorly I do not think you will be equal to the fatigue, and we are so happy and so much to ourselves here—I think I shall write a line to my mother to tell her not to expect us for a few days—and I can spend the greater part of them here, and yet push matters on so in the city, that our marriage can take place a month earlier than *we* had hoped. Say, love, shall I step in and write to my mother—what is the ball to us! What a bore compared to

sitting in this arbour, enjoying the present and planning for the future. *I* hate the thought of the ball."

"The ball! Oh, we must go to the ball!" faltered the guilty girl, for alas; the thought of the ball with the object of her blind and passionate worship made her false heart reel with treacherous rapture. "Dora has set her heart on going to the ball; she cannot go unless we do, and I have promised faithfully not to disappoint her."

"But you are so ill, you look so pale, so agitated."

"I shall be quite well to-morrow; but I am a little upset, and I think, with your leave, I will go and lie down for an hour."

"Well then, I will hasten into the city, and see what can be done to accelerate matters: Now don't go and fret—all will soon come right—try to get a little sleep—but if you don't feel quite equal to this

ball, I do not see that Dora's going is a matter of the slightest importance—indeed this Bernard Brydges who is to go with us, and with whom she seems so charmed, may only be a second edition of her ensign—and have some idea of marrying her, poor, weak, romantic Dora, for her seventy thousand pounds.”

“Oh, no ! George, he is quite above any such thing, he is a very generous noble-hearted, high-spirited man,—”

“And yet my pet preferred her poor George to him. Oh how can I ever prove half my gratitude and love.”

“Well, *au revoir*, I am going to lie down.”

“One kiss, darling—one sweet kiss;” and Penelope dared not refuse.

Oh the degrading, the complicated, the inevitable miseries of a woman who accepts one man while all the passions of her heart and soul are squandered on another's.

Of all treasons, none brings with it a punishment so certain and so terrible !

This is retribution indeed !

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BALL.

PENELOPE returned to Addington House, but not with her Intended. In any case, of course, etiquette would have forbidden their travelling *tete-a-tete*, but we have known affianced lovers on the point of marriage, by the aid of an Abigail, and a little coaxing of "mamma," contrive the furtive and premature delight of a *tete-à-tete* journey; and Mr. Addington was bent

upon this, but Penelope, who dreaded as much as he desired it was resolute. In a passionate and private interview with her mother, she insisted, on pain of her at once breaking off this engagement, that her mother should oppose Mr. Addington's scheme so decidedly that the blame if any should rest with her.

Now as Mr. Percy Ashton, who was all for the strictest propriety and nicest etiquette, was called into the council and thoroughly negatived Mr. Addington's proposal, lauding his niece's sacrifice of inclination to propriety, the lover was obliged to give way—not perhaps loving or respecting Penelope at all the less—it may be a great deal the more, for a resolution of which, entirely mistaking the motives, he, in his own mind, exalted the merit.

“What exquisite purity, with regard to others, must distinguish the feelings and conduct of that girl, who could so freely resist the exquisite pleasure of a *tete-a-tete* journey,

at which her friends would have connived, and which the world would not have suspected, with a man she loves, with the exclusive ardor with which she loves me."

So thought poor Addington, as he blest Penelope, himself, his stars and all things in this bright and blissful world.

Alas! alas!

Can she, who has strained every nerve and exerted every power of her mind to avoid this short trip alone with Mr. Addington, can she ever doom herself to that long *tete-a-tete* journey of life, to which he is looking forward with so blind a rapture, and of which she cannot think without loathing and alarm.

And yet thousands before her have set out on such a journey, with similar feelings, and thousands yet unborn will do the same! Oh this world! this world!

Penelope who had posted in Mr. Addington's travelling chariot arrived in time to dress for dinner.

“Is Mr. Addington here?” was her first question.

All who overheard it, his mother, himself, and all the servants mistook its import! Indeed to them it spoke the anxiety and impatience of love.

It was faltered out in an agony of fear.

The servant thought to please her by the ready affirmative which blanched her cheek and seemed to chill her heart.

He, himself, as she hurried to her room, half-opened his dressing-room door and said—

“Well, dearest, I’ve beat you—I’m so sorry I’m not quite ready to see you—but I’ll be down in five minutes—make haste and get your things off, and we shall have half an hour together alone before dinner.”

“Where is Dora?”

“She is in the garden with Mr. Bernard Brydges, who dines here to-day. Don’t dress for dinner, love; after dinner you

must dress for the ball, and you know to me you are ever “when unadorned adorned the most.”

The idea of not dressing for dinner when Bernard would be there; of hurrying down in a dusty travelling dress in order to undergo the dreadful ordeal of a *tete-à-tete* with her affianced!

Penelope almost wept with anger and vexation, but she determined to dress herself to the greatest advantage, and sacrifice, (ill-judging, guilty fool that she was), the wishes of the honest heart that adored her, to the pleasure of shining before the eyes of the base deceiver who was only making her a stepping-stone to his own fortunes, a tool for his own purpose, a victim and a dupe.

As Penelope looked from her window she saw Dora ridiculously overdressed, and assuming the most jaunty coquetry of manner, sporting about the lawn and along the shrubberies with Bernard Brydges—

she was followed by a little snow-white French poodle that Penelope had never seen before—and which her jealous heart suggested Bernard had, perhaps, given ; but as she dressed herself in a new and elegant costume—and as the glass reflected her cheeks flushed with emotion—her eyes full of passionate fire—her form so proud and so perfect—and the beauty over which love shed a lustre love alone can shed, she contrasted her own exquisite grace and beauty with the little unshapen form, gaudy attire, sandy hair, weak eyes, and quaint absurdity of the figure ambling by Bernard's side ; and she felt ashamed of her own momentary jealousy.

Had she, in weighing herself and Dora in the scale, just put in seventy thousand pounds on Dora's side—that sum in which Bernard Brydges's whole soul is, in reality, wrapped up—how different would her deduction have been !

“Poor, dear Bernard! how he must love me! to tolerate her and her odious advances, miserable attempt at coquetry, and wearisome affectations for my sake! But then, on my side, what have I not endured for him? Alas! alas! how is it all to end? I must understand his scheme—I cannot play this part much longer; but, at any rate, I must be all kindness to-night, for what a penance has he not endured for me to-day.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE BLOOMER COSTUME.

THE dinner passed off pretty well. Mr. Addington's spirits were so high, and his mirth so boy-like in its exuberance, that his mother felt almost angry with herself for her recent suspicions of, and misgivings about Penelope—and seeing in her the source of so much happiness to her beloved son, she felt anxious to atone for

the growing dislike and disapproval—which she knew she had felt, and which she feared she had betrayed—but which Penelope had been far too self-engrossed to discover or even to suspect.

A ball is a very exciting and delightful event to people in love, and all our party were, (though sadly at cross purposes) certainly, more or less in love. Bernard Brydges, the least so, it is true, because his was a love which he was ready and eager to sacrifice to wealth and wealth's certain attendant power ; but still even to his interested and selfish heart there was a wild, intoxicating joy in the thought of the long drive to the ball-room, with a creature so lovely—the only one he had ever loved, and whose intense worship of himself was at once so flattering to his vanity, and so bewildering to his senses.

Mr. Addington's honest love was full of pride in its object, glory in her grace, her *goodness* ! and her beauty ; confidence in

her entire and exclusive devotion, and satisfaction in himself and his own powers, which, unaided by art, and so long unrecognised even by himself, had won him, as he fondly thought, the very gem of the female world, and outweighed in the wise and maidenly counsels of her pure heart, the brilliant fascinations, and great powers of pleasing and of winning, which even he could not deny to Bernard Brydges.

Then Dora! no girl of fifteen was ever more wildly, more foolishly, more romantically in love than poor Dora! The "nut-brown maid," which Bernard had repeated to her in her shubbery, and had taken the trouble of writing out for her in his own daintiest hand, on glazed and highly scented pink paper; this was her study; and this love of Emma for Henry, so abject in its clinging self-abnegation, scarcely, to her thinking, sufficiently portrayed her weak and almost puerile worship of this King of Coxcombs!

Penelope's love ! the love which she felt it was such guilt to encourage while pledged to another ; and which even had she been free, was far too much like idolatry, not to offend Him who is a jealous God—Penelope's love was of that kind which must end in disappointment and despair. If what the world calls unfortunate, its doom is certain, and life is one wild insane regret for the loss of an imaginary treasure. More certain that doom if the love ends, in the world's vain verbiage happily—for then even the illusion is gone—the idol stands revealed, after the painful and gradual process of disenchantment, with front of brass and feet of clay. And of the two the “ happy love ” has ended in the more complete disappointment. But we wake not till our dream is over, and Penelope's guilty dream is at its height.

She will not think, she will not reason, she will only *feel* at least to-night.

"I shall have time enough for thought," she whispered, to herself, in answer to a whisper of conscience, when she reached her own room. Time, aye! eternity—poor wretch!

Penelope had pretty dresses with her, and had intended to make one of them do. Her funds were low, her milliner, as we know, had become a most tormenting dun; and so, with some little regret that she could not, in the freshest of new fashions, outshine all the most elegant at this ball, she had decided on wearing an amber crape dress of the year before—one which she had worn on an evening in which Bernard had been more than usually devoted to her.

However, the delicate forethought of love, even in the banker-heart of Mr. Addington, had been busy here. He, kind thoughtful creature, already at heart a husband, had, in a long consultation with Mrs. Ashton, ascertained that Penelope

had not ordered a new dress for this ball.

She, delighting with maternal vanity in the idea of Penelope outshining all others, had easily lent herself to scheme for surprising her with a ball-dress, such as she never had dreamt of in her days of maiden contrivance and enforced economy ; nor did Mrs. Ashton forget, the while, to extol her dear girl's absence of coquetry, and wish to avoid expense—in not having even thought of a new dress for this ball.

While Penelope was lying down to avoid the garden *tête-à-tête* with this generous and devoted man, he had persuaded Mrs. Ashton, his carriage being at the gate, to drive with him to Madame ——'s. The Queen, nay, the Empress of *modistes*, of whom, young ladies, in our Penelopes class, only thought with awe, and spoke of with reverence ; but never ventured to approach ! since to such, there was ruin in a

wreath, and despair in a dress of hers! Still, mighty as she was, the quiet equipage and magic of a name—a name revered in Lombard Street, even the name of Mr. Addington—had no little effect on Madame.

Mrs. Ashton, who had provided herself with Penelope's pattern, in a few whispered words, while Mr. Addington spoke to his coachman, put Madame *au fait* of the little plot.

And the *charmante surprise*, and *aimable galanterie de ce charmant Monsieur Addington—ce millionnaire, ce fiancé comme il y en a peu* won all the sympathies of the little Frenchwoman's heart—in which, love of money, and of romance, of *cette jolie intrigue si gracieuse*, and of the *jolie petite mémoire*, she had already made out in her busy brain—went curiously hand in hand.

Mrs. Ashton having described her daughter—and Mr. Addington having

modestly put in, that expense was no object—Madame, her little black eyes in a fine frenzy rolling, gave herself up, for a few minutes, to what she called *l'inspiration de mon genie*—then suddenly exclaiming *J'y suis—J'y suis—comptez sur moi—le tems presse—je pourrai a tout—pour demain soir*—Miss Ashton, at G. Addington's, Esquire, Addington House, near Brighton, she continued reading with a strong French accent, the card Mr. Addington had written out in his clear banker hand—*comptez sur moi—j'ai l'honneur de vous saluer, Monsieur, Madame, comptez sur moi!*

And they did well to depend on her; for punctually, in full time for the most elaborate toilette, came the *wicker idols* for Penelope's worship, and the cartons, containing all the elegant accessories—more important even than the dress itself.

Penelope blushed with the liveliest pleasure at this surprise, and then grew

sick and pale with shame as her heart, or rather her conscience, told her whence it came. But to decline it in the present state of affairs, was impossible ; and when dear, kind Mr. Addington knocked at her door, and said—‘I hope you like your dress, my darling!’ as if it had been a matter of a few pounds, Penelope came to the door, and bursting, in spite of herself, into tears, found herself, also in spite of herself, clasped to his bosom, and those tears kissed away by his lips.

And, at that very moment, Bernard came out of his room ; but drew back as though he were disturbing a tender *tête à-tête* of love.

How proud, under any other circumstances, would Penelope have felt of the exquisite attire Madame had *imaginé* ; nothing more pure in taste, more perfect in style, more costly in material, and more becoming in effect, could have been devised

had Madame —— been called upon to devise a ball dress for the *début* of the Princess Royal of England.

The lace seemed woven by fairies—the flowers fresh from Paradise—the gloves, the wreath, the *mouchoir*, the *mantelet pour l'entrée*—every thing was perfection—nothing had been forgotten—and an exquisite scent of iris, or of something even still rarer and sweeter pervaded everything in these magic treasures.

While Penelope was braiding her hair, Mrs. Addington sent a message, saying she wanted to see her for a moment, and begged she would come to her in her wrapper.

Penelope, surprised, and somewhat alarmed, hastened to obey. Penelope found her with several curious old boxes of trinkets before her.

She held out her spare, old, withered hand—with the veins like cordage, and thin, large jointed fingers—and said,

“I have been looking among my old stores of treasures and trinkets for something to offer you, my dear, on this grand occasion. I know young girls have seldom many jewels, and, indeed, I never would let my husband spend much on me in that way—an example I hope you will follow—for the love of ornaments is a very ruinous and a very insatiable taste. Still I have some valuables, which, some day, will be divided between Dora and you—my two daughters—for the wife of my George must be my daughter, indeed. Now, here is a pearl comb, which would look very rich in your dark hair—a coral necklace and bracelets, which cost a good deal of money—and a watch, somewhat large for the present fashion; but which looks grand, and goes well. The necklace, bracelets, and comb, I hope you will wear to-night; and I see, my dear, that you make my son so happy, that I have the greatest pleasure in giving you these tokens

of my esteem, which I have always hoarded up for his wife—little thinking, indeed, he would choose exactly as he has done ; but he knows his own taste best ; and seems so very, very happy, that I doubt not Heaven will bless his marriage ; so kiss me, my dear, and God bless you.”

Penelope’s heart could not say “Amen,” though she kissed the wan and furrowed cheek held out to her ; and taking the quaint, old-fashioned presents, with graceful acknowledgments, carried them with her to her own room.

Of course, they increased her perplexities. The watch, handsome enough in its day, with a white, chubby face, and in a case of gold, curiously enamelled, with several short rows of Venetian chain, and a number of quaint old seals—what could she do with it ? She was not expected to wear it at the ball certainly ;

but still, as a curious antique, it was less offensive to her than the pearl comb and the coral ornaments.

At length, a bright idea struck her. She fastened it to a rich, old-fashioned chatelaine, which she always wore, and of which she was very fond—and the effect was excellent—she buried the pearl-comb among the braids of her black hair—but the coral necklace was quite unmanageable. The idea of entering a ball-room with Bernard Brydges and a coral necklace put her into a fever, and she resolved to tell him of her dilemma, and trust to him to extricate her. The bracelets, thanks to the exquisite trimming of her gloves, were quite concealed—at least, would be so, after Mrs. Addington had seen her in her gifts—and so this great difficulty was got over.

But a far more important one arose connected with the toilet of the weak and ill-judging Dora. She had taken counsel

of the strong-minded Madame La Comtesse de la Pirouette.

And when Penelope, in her exquisite and unrivalled toilet, had enchanted the eyes of Mr. Addington and Bernard Brydges—and both were impatient to escort her to the ball, the door was thrown open, and Dora, wrapped in a large cloak—her hair curled *à la Brutus*, with a glittering wreath round her head, came in. She looked conscious and uncomfortable, and refused to let Penelope and the gentlemen see her dress. But they were determined to do so—and a playful struggle ensued—when, to the amazement of all—the indignation of Mr. Addington—the supreme delight of Bernard Brydges, who delighted in a good laugh, no matter at whose expense—and the annoyance of Penelope, who was eager to be off, Dora appeared in a very beautiful, brilliant, and costly Bloomer costume.

Her pelisse was of geranium velvet, richly worked with gold—her tunic, white satin, splendidly embroidered — her trowsers, golden tissue—her boots, white kid. The dress, in itself, was exquisite, richly wrought in all its parts, and beautifully made—and Dora, with a *souppçon de rouge*, looked far better than she had ever looked before.

But her brother turned pale with anger, and so peremptorily insisted on her immediately changing her dress, or giving up the ball—that Dora had no choice—and was obliged to avail herself of Penelope's wardrobe, and Hannah's needle, for she had no other ball-dress ready—except the pink satin, which Penelope considered equivalent in absurdity to the Bloomer costume.

While Mr. Addington was angrily censuring Dora for her unfeminine folly—Penelope took the opportunity of conveying to the admiring Bernard the dilemma

she was in about the, to him, inexplicable coral necklace which disgraced her swan-like throat and perfect costume.

“Let it come unfastened *en route*,” he said, “and hand it to me to make it snap better, I will take care it never snaps again.”

Mrs. Addington attributed much of the beauty of the Bride Elect to the pearl comb and the coral ornaments.

It was eleven before Dora was ready ; and as they drove along, Penelope suddenly exclaimed—

“I have dropped my necklace—it has come unsnapped.”

Both gentlemen stooped to find it. Bernard picked it up, and exclaimed—

“As the clasp is broken—you cannot wear it!”

“What a pity,” said Penelope.

“A thousand pities,” said Mr. Addington, “I never saw any thing so becoming in my life. Let me see—”

But nothing could be done, and at Penelope's request, he put it in his pocket.

Penelope never wore it again. And so that affair was disposed of.

CHAPTER X.

THE BALL.

MR. ADDINGTON, considering how passionately he loved his beautiful Bride Elect, was very generous, confiding, and unselfish.

He only danced quadrilles himself—and, of course, was not disposed to waste one of the few that occurred that evening on any one but Penelope ; but knowing

her excellence in other dances, and her great delight in them, he would not accept the sacrifice she half-proposed, and promoted her both polking, and waltzing, and galloping, too, with Bernard Brydges, the best dancer in the room, and a few first-rate *beaux*, who begged to be introduced by the stewards.

Penelope in her unequalled elegance of attire and in her loving and triumphant beauty, was beyond all comparison the belle of that ball ; and Mr. Addington as he pushed into the ring of admirers whose murmurs of applause reached his ears, and even hers, more than once wiped away a tear of love and pride, at the thought that the idol of this brilliant crowd loved and cared for him alone !

The appearance and the impression Penelope made, was not without its effect in brightening, if possible, the unprincipled passion of Bernard Brydges ; but interest called him back from many a trance of

admiration, and for one dance with Penelope he paid the bitter price of half a dozen with Dora Addington.

They had practised so much together at the Academie de Monsieur Le Comte de la Pirouette, that their performance was remarkably good ; and as rumour trebled and quadrupled Dora's fortune, and Bernard Brydges's devotion confirmed the idea of her wealth, there were very few "*elegans* who did not obtain an introduction, and request the honor, &c., &c., &c."

But Dora despised them all, treated them with the greatest *nonchalance* and *hauteur* (thus greatly increasing their devotion,) and gloried in her open preference of her idolized Bernard ; who, seeing her the object of an almost devoted attention, from many honourable and military exclusives to whom he looked up with reverence—became ten-fold more assiduous and *empresé* himself.

Yes, Dora Addington, as the greatest heiress present, and Penelope Ashton as

he greatest beauty and *élégante* received the homage of all the men, and filled with wrath and envy the hearts of all the women !—

There was a costly, nay, a superb supper, and Mr. Addington led in Penelope, and Bernard Brydges gave his arm to the triumphant and enraptured Dora ; but as they all sat together, the false Bernard was able to divide his attentions, and words apparently addressed to Dora, made Penelope's cheeks burn and her heart tremble ; and she sat by the side of him to whom she was affianced, and who so adored, so loved, so trusted her, and to whom it was Heaven to listen to her silver laugh, her playful prattle, and to gaze on her animated beauty ; and even in the solemn presence of that betrothed and all but wedded love, her guilty heart could throb with ecstasy, her whole frame thrill with joy at some slight touch or furtive glance of the frivolous deceiver on her other side. And oh, so

slippery are the down-hill paths --so rapid the descent when once woman—turning wilfully away from stern principle—gives herself up to headlong passion, that Penelope began to lose the sense of shame, at the part she was playing, and only to feel it when the possibility of detection crossed her mind.

“I must have an interview with him,” she said to herself, “I must see him somewhere, when in a long and uninterrupted conversation, I can ascertain what his object is and what is to be the end of all this deception and disguise ; I will write him a little note, and get him to meet me in the shrubbery ; I cannot bear my present position, and there must be an end to it.”

Dora too, was planning a note to bring Bernard Brydges to the point, a much easier matter in her case, because as the French say, “*Il ne demandait pas mieux.*”

The drive home was very pleasant to all parties, and wrapt up in cloaks and shawls

—the ladies were easily persuaded to enjoy the beautiful moonlight in the shrubbery, and on the lawn for half an hour before retiring to bed—

Mr. Addington naturally wished to lead Penelope away into a bower, to themselves, and Dora was watching her opportunity to trip off with Bernard—But Penelope whispered to her—

“Let us keep together, we must not make ourselves too cheap!” and that remark, weak and imitative as Dora was, detained her.

At length, a light appeared at Mrs. Addington’s window, a loud tapping was heard, a voluminously frilled night cap was seen, a long thin warning hand was raised, and the whole party, were motioned back into the house—Bernard Brydges remained with Mr. Addington some time, drinking hot negus—which his mother insisted, by a message, on his taking before going to bed—after the ladies were gone to their rooms;

on approaching his toilet, to admire the charms, which were causing such confusion in two tender hearts, he found a billet in Penelope's well known hand : it ran thus—

“ I must see you to-morrow morning before breakfast—meet me at eight in the honey-suckle bower, no one ever goes there, and should they chance to do so, our meeting will seem accidental ; I must fully understand your plans, and views, for I can play this odious part no longer.”

Bernard tore the note in a paroxysm of vexation,

“ You shall play it till I have eloped with Dora,” he muttered, “ fool, impatient fool ! that you are—of course I mean you to play it to the end ; you must marry Mr. Addington, and if you love me so madly, you ought to be too glad that there is a shadow of excuse for our meeting, at all ! However, I'll to-bed, and see how I can avoid this, in the morning.”

“ Ah, what have we here?”

On his pillow, he found Dora's bouquet, and fastened to it a note, in her weak, straggling hand—

“ BELOVED!”

“ How beautiful you looked at the ball ! How proud I felt when I saw you turn from all the other belles to devote your noble, lovely self to your poor little Dora—and she had her admirers too, but despised them all for your sake—will you meet me to-morrow morning, in the walk at the end of the garden ? I will be there at eight—the other cool matter of fact lovers, will be fast asleep, mind you come, and don't keep me waiting,”

“ Your own

“ DORA.”

Bernard Brydges laughed—heartless

deceiver, as he was, as he perceived that both his victims had appointed him for the same hour.

Love, ruinous and disastrous, called him to the honeysuckle bower, and he stamped at the thought. Interest, wealth, ambition, invited him to the lime walk, and he resolved to go ; and if possible, finally to settle matters with Dora, and arrange the elopement on which so much depended.

But it would not do to have Penelope watching in the bower which was not so very far from the lime-tree walk, so he hastily wrote—

“ You must be mad ! meet you in a bower, and that here ! here where detection is utter, irretrievable ruin ! You must wish to involve *me* in a duel, and to expose, disgrace, destroy yourself ! Is this the gifted, devoted, high-minded Penelope ? How little you value the fortunate

and extraordinary chance which enables us to meet so pleasantly here, and promises to secure our happiness through life. We will meet, but not yet—not till I can be certain of time to explain everything, and to lay matters fairly before you, and that can hardly be until Mr. A—— is again in town. Till then, if you love me, be discreet, everything depends on you and your devotion, not to selfish feeling but to my best interests.

“B. B.”

This note he took to Penelope's door, and tapped very gently; but she, expecting an answer, was still kneeling in her wrapper by her bed, her face buried in the clothes. She hastened to the door, the note was on a stand close by—the writer was gone.

Penelope read it with mingled feelings of anger and surprise. She burst into a passion of tears.

“Selfish feeling, his best interests, what can he mean! Surely he does not imagine that I can complete this sacrifice! That adoring him I can marry Mr. Addington. And he, perhaps, for the sake of her wealth unite himself to that miserable Dora. Oh, he cannot be so false! So mean! So base! And yet why is it more false, more mean, more base in him to marry Dora—than it would have been in me to wed Mr. Addington, and I certainly did mean to do so—nay I am here as his Bride Elect. Perhaps Bernard really thinks I can survive this double sacrifice, and live through the martyrdom of giving myself to another while he does the same. Can he meditate that! Can he really mean it! Oh, God! Oh, God! He must, he does. ‘How little I value the fortunate and extraordinary chance which enables us to meet so pleasantly here, and promises to secure our happiness through after life!’ How ambiguous! What hap-

piness can we have through after life, except as a wedded pair. He cannot be so base as to imagine, for a moment, that I can continue to love him with this guilty love, if he is the husband, and I, the wife of another! And yet, I know, alas! his principles are sadly tinged with the vile immorality of the *Dumas*, the *Eugene Sue*, and the *George Sand* school, in which he so delights; and I, what right have I to feel and shew this virtuous indignation. Do I not here, under the very roof of the man who loves me so tenderly, so nobly, while actually his Bride Elect, accepting his gifts, and in the venerable presence of his fond and virtuous mother—do I not dare to carry on what, seen by the light of truth instead of passion, is not a romantic and poetical sacrifice, but a vile deception and a base intrigue. ‘To meet so pleasantly here.’ Oh, what must be the conscience of any woman who could feel this dreadful intercourse to be pleasant meeting. Pleas-

sant meeting! when the good, trusting man I am so deceiving, is ever present, and a furtive look, or touch, or a word addressed to another and meant for me, these are all my wretched heart has to feast upon, or to atone—‘and promises to secure our happiness through after life.’ Oh, thank you Bernard, bless you dearest, *that* can admit but of one interpretation, there can be no happiness for us in after life, but wedded happiness, so I will try to play on this wretched part till the interview you allude to, when you will tell me more fully what this crooked and mysterious policy means, till when I must trust in you alone.

Poor Penelope, after this false deduction, hastened to her bed; and was still sleeping while Bernard Brydges and Dora Addington met in the lime walk, and came to an understanding, which, had she known it, would have driven sleep for ever from her eyes, and while they formed plans of which the brilliant result will be seen hereafter.

We must leave, for a little while, this painful scene of passion and deception, and enquire what is become of poor Blanche—whom we left ill and miserable, another, but a far more guiltless, victim of “unmeaning attentions.”

CHAPTER XI.

BLANCHE.

ISABEL gone—and gone in triumph, and in joy—Penelope absent, and such bright prospects awaiting her—Mrs. Ashton had time to think a little more about poor Blanche, and to feel a little more for the delicate health and deeply depressed spirits which a small degree of attention on the mother's part enabled her to discover.

This was far from being a source of comfort to poor Blanche—to whom solitude, tears, and prayer were now the only real comforts left—Mrs. Ashton had no sympathy with such sources of consolation—What worldly person has ?”

Doctors, diet, change of air and scene, exercise, company, dress, light reading, these were her resources in such a case, and these were terrible to Blanche.

She longed for Penelope’s return, and the preparations for her nuptials, that her mother might cease to watch her fading cheek, and reproach her with her heavy eyes, and shrunken, stooping form. *En attendant* the summons from Sir Hector to meet them at Baden, Mrs. Ashton, to Blanche’s great horror, has invited herself, with Blanche, to spend a week with her sister-in-law, Mrs. Wylie.

This sister-in-law, whose views, feelings, habits and opinions were diametrically opposed to Mrs. Ashton’s, was perhaps the

most uncomfortable person Mrs. Ashton could have fixed upon on the present occasion.

However, her object was to change the air and scene for Blanche without incurring an expense she had just then no funds to meet ; and she was all anxiety to dwell on the brilliant marriage of Isabel, and the approaching splendid wedding of Penelope, in the presence of one who had always prophesied such total failure and utter ruin—and whose own daughters seemed to have so little chance of ever making any matches at all.

The strictest economy regulated the household of Mrs. Wylie. She lived in a house of her own in the dull quaker-ridden town of Staines—a large red brick house in the chief street of Staines, with a green door and shutters, a bright brass knocker, and a strip of garden behind.

There was no elegance, and very little comfort in Mrs. Wylie's house. The

evening the self-invited guests arrived, it was, though August by the almanack, December to the feelings ; but a fire was a thing which Mrs. Wylie would have regarded as an absurdity amounting almost to a crime ; no sofa and no easy chairs offered the slightest comfort to poor Blanche's aching limbs. There were two hard, painful settees against the wall at one end of the room ; but they were covered with black horse-hair, studded with brass nails, and so high, narrow, tightly stuffed, and slippery, that even a common straight-backed chair was a luxury in comparison.

Mrs. Ashton's plan was to arrive for a six o'clock dinner. She had forgotten that her sister-in-law always dined at one.

Tea, however, had been waiting some time when Mrs. Ashton and Blanche arrived. Mrs. Wylie was presiding,

and her daughters cut the bread and butter to avoid waste.

Mrs. Wylie had never cast aside her widow's cap, and her widow's *weeds*—which *weeds* formed a curious contrast to the flowers which adorned the bonnet and the '*tou-de-tête*' of the fashionable widow, Mrs. Ashton.

Indeed, nothing could be more smiling, dressy, modern, and elegant than the one ; nothing more stern, homely and forbidding than the other.

Very erect, hard-featured, silent, rather sarcastic, and very dignified, Mrs. Wylie scarcely tolerated the warm embraces of her *démonstrative* sister-in-law ; but she received Blanche Ashton herself, with some affection, and said—

“ Poor thing ! I'm sure she does want change of some kind ; what, is this the merry, little, golden-headed, chubby Blanche I remember ! Well, sister, I'm thankful

my girls are country-bred, if London is the cause of all this."

"Oh! but you should see Penelope—a perfect Hebe for bloom—and my Isabel, (Lady Loftus I ought to say, I suppose) such a brilliant creature!"

"And what makes Blanche such a shadow then?"

"Oh! I don't know; but she'll soon pick up here."

There was not much for her to pick up, except some hard dry toast, and some thick bread and butter.

"Well, I hope so. Will you have a slice of cold mutton, my dear? We have some cold mutton in the house, haven't we, Bridget?"

Bridget said—

"Yes, mother," and then whispered, "It is for the hash to-morrow, mother."

Bridget and Hannah were fully impressed with all their mother's notions and

opinions, and were to the full as saving, self-denying, and economical as she was.

Blanche declined the cold mutton with outward thanks and an inward shudder; but Mrs. Ashton who was really very hungry, begged to have a slice broiled, and the appalling request was complied with, to the unspeakable horror of the mistress, her daughters, and the two thrifty maids, who had scarcely a handful of fire whereon to broil this extraordinary luxury.

Bridget Wylie was very like her mother; with sharp black eyes, high cheek bones, thin mouth, massive chin, and tall, raw-boned frame; her plainly braided hair was black and wiry, and her pink gingham dress plain in the extreme, whilst her manners were harsh and abrupt. Hannah was red-haired, freckled and much shorter and fatter; equally plain in her dress, and not much more engaging in her manners than her sister—they had been brought up

never to lose a moment, and directly tea was over, they produced their work-baskets, placed their mother's ready for her, and began some regular, good, hard sewing and hemming, their bright, sharp needles running a sort of race—as they always challenged each other to the liveliest competition.

It was evident that so far from being at all impressed with the elegance, fashionable airs, and restless fine ladyism of Mrs. Ashton and Blanche, they thoroughly despised them, and when Blanche, ashamed of sitting idle while others were so busy, kindly asked if she could help them, Miss Bridget said, with a smile—

“I'm afraid we have no work that would suit you—we work in earnest, and these linens are for our Dorcas club, a sort of thing, you, I dare say, never heard of.”

“Blanche, weak, weary, and thoroughly disheartened, gave up the point, but Mrs. Wylie took out of her basket a little

baby's cap, ready cut out, and saying "look my dear Blanche, here is a little matter better suited to you than those coarse linens. If you will make this for me, it will be a very great help."

Blanche smiled and complied, and was soon very busy with the little cap.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Wylie, "as you, sister Ashton, have nothing to do, you will oblige us by reading aloud; I know you of old, as a very good reader, and we are deep in Tomline's life of Pitt; as you are something of a tactician yourself, perhaps it will be interesting to you."

Mrs. Ashton could not refuse, but she took no interest in the book—was excessively chilly, and accustomed to the softest of couches and easiest of *bergères*, was wretched in her straight-backed uneasy chair. She thought the evening never would come to an end, and after her penance was over, the work-baskets, were put away, and the psalms, lessons, and evening

prayers, were read by Mrs. Wylie herself. The chamber candles were then brought in, and the ladies retired to their rooms.

Blanche and her mother had a large, clean, airy, double-bedded room, very scantily furnished, and as they were both very chilly, and the evening was very cold, they sadly missed their customary indulgence of a dressing-room fire.

"Well," said Mrs. Ashton, "I do think the miseries of this evening are sufficient to atone for all the sins I ever committed. What a fool I was to come to this wretched place, and now I must stay till I can get money for our journey back, and that cannot be for a week ; why I shall die of hunger and cold, I am quite famished as it is."

"It is very cold, but aunt is kind, I think—" said poor Blanche, shivering as she lay down in her white dimity bed.

It was not very long before mother and daughter were asleep—nor did it seem very long to them before a housemaid knocked at the door, and brought in two jugs of warm water.

“Why, what o’clock is it?” asked Mrs. Ashton, in dismay.

“Half-past six, ma’am, and breakfast’s at seven.”

“What a horrid bore!” said Mrs. Ashton, “and I know your aunt is so punctual and so particular! but then you look so ill, I’ll beg her to excuse you, and ask her to send you up a cup of tea.”

“No, dear mamma,” said Blanche, “let me get up, and you remain in bed;” but as she tried to rise, she sank back again, and Mrs. Ashton insisted on her remaining where she was, and hastily dressing herself, went down stairs.

“We have waited ten minutes, sister,” said Mrs. Wylie “but for a London

lady you are very tolerably punctual.—Where's Blanche ?”

“I must beg you to send her a cup of tea.”

“Ah poor thing, she's in a very bad way, London has ruined her constitution; well, after prayers I will indulge her, for I think she really is ill.” The psalms, the lessons, and family prayers were read, and then came the breakfast, consisting only of tea, dry toast, and bread and butter.

Mrs. Ashton wished to console herself for so many privations, by boasting a little of Isabel's grandeur, and Penelope's approaching nuptial's, but Mrs. Wylie had no wish to hear these details, and was very anxious that no worldly vanity or ambitious hopes should disturb her daughters' peace of mind; she therefore begged Mrs. Ashton to resume her reading aloud of Tomline's life of Pitt, and the work-baskets and coarse linens were again introduced.

In about two hours Blanche came down, looking very wan and wasted.

Mrs. Wylie kissed her affectionately—put a stool under her feet, and a shawl round her, and handed her the little cap, saying—

“ ‘Idleness is the root of all evil, and of all illness!’ ”

Blanche smiled, and pursued her task. A country walk was then proposed—Blanche only being excused—then came an early dinner consisting of a roast leg of mutton (under done), a Yorkshire pudding, two sorts of vegetables, and a plum tart.

After this the reading, and the work were resumed till tea-time, then came an evening walk along the turn-pike road, and then more work, more reading, the psalms, lessons, prayers, and bed at ten.

Poor Mrs. Ashton, quite worn out with a sort of life so odious to her, fairly cried with vexation when she got into her own room; and poor Blanche, languid and

weary, missing the luxury of solitude, and all the little comforts of her own room, knew not how to console her.

“A week of this will kill *me*,” said poor Mrs. Ashton, “and what with that odious and incessant reading, which has made me quite hoarse—By the bye, I have not been able to give any account of Isabel’s match, or say more than a few words about Penelope’s. Your aunt has positively declined being at Pen’s wedding, or letting those hideous house-maids or daughters act as bridesmaids, and I am very glad she has ; for I must say I should be heartily ashamed of them—Oh, what a fool I was to come to this odious place!—when, oh! when shall I be able to get away?”

Poor Blanche was quite as anxious to get away as her mother ; but she was too weak and weary to lament aloud. And she had a grief in her heart, which made all the minor evils of life seem trifling ; but the large tears were falling on her

pillow, and a sense of utter desolation was in her heart.

However, a delightful surprise awaited poor Mrs. Ashton when she hurried down stairs the next day. A letter from the newly married pair, the first since they had reached the continent, awaited her. It was full of happiness, and contained (sent by Isabel) a fifty pound note, and an earnest entreaty from Sir Hector that they would, as soon as convenient, repair to Baden Baden, to await himself and his darling bride there. Mrs. Ashton could scarcely conceal her rapture; but she did do so until she could rush up to Blanche to tell her the good news.

“Get up, my love! I shall send for a fly to take us to the station, and we will be off at once.”

“But will not aunt take that amiss?”

“Oh I cannot help it if she does. I shall say I am called away by most pressing business, and certainly no business can be

so pressing to me as that of getting away from this most odious place—leave it all to me, only get up as quickly as you can that we may avoid the odious hashed mutton which I am quite certain awaits us—remembering as I do that dreadful, tough, scarlet joint of yesterday !”

Mrs. Ashton was resolved to go. She declared that the most imperative business called her away. Mrs. Wylie was very sarcastic, and evidently did not believe a word of it ; but Mrs. Ashton had her fifty pound note in her pocket, and felt quite independent again. The fly was ordered ; Blanche came down ready—Mrs. Wylie took a very cool leave of her sister-in-law, and a very affectionate one of Blanche. The Misses Wylie were quite unmoved—if anything they looked rather pleased.

The fly bore our friends to the station, and the journey to town, in a first-class carriage, was quite a luxury, after what

they had endured. They arrived at Ashton Lodge in high spirits ; and there, the first thing that met Blanche's eye was Trevor Templeton's card, and a note from a Mrs. De Vere—one of their most fashionable friends. It ran thus :

“Dearest Blanche,

“Will you, your mamma, and Penelope, (if with you) honour a little impromptu *soirée dansante* this evening. We expect your friend T. T. and a great many lions and lionesses. Pray come early.

“Your affectionate,

“CLOTHILDE DE VERE.”

Poor Blanche grew red and white—hot and cold—hysterical and faint, by turns.

Her mother laid her on the sofa, and gave her some *sal volatile*, and said—

“ I fear, my love, you are not well enough to go.”

“ Oh, mamma, I would not miss going for the world !” said Blanche, bursting into tears.

“ Well, then,” said her mother, “ you must keep quite quiet in the meantime, and promise to control yourself when there. Nothing would injure you so much as a scene. Do you promise, if I agree to your going, that you will control yourself ?”

I do, mamma ; no one shall guess what is passing in my heart.”

“ Ah, you are but a poor dissembler, my love,” said Mrs. Ashton. “ However, I will trust you this once. Trevor, I see, has called—that looks well—and I have no doubt, much will depend on yourself, and how you play your cards to-night. I shall watch him closely, *sans qu’il s’en doute*, I

am quite resolved he shall not trifle with your affections, and make you a laughing-stock and a bye-word."

"Oh, mamma! he has no such thoughts; why, unless he means all that is kind and honourable; why should he have called here at all."

"Oh! he may wish to conciliate. He is rather afraid of me. However, we'll hope for the best; and now I advise you to have a warm bath, and then go fairly to bed, to recover a little, if possible, from the horrible effects of our martyrdom at Staines. It is very important you should look to advantage; and, at present, with those pale cheeks and red eyes, I don't think he would even know you."

Blanche thought so too, as she passed the pier-glass on her way to her own room, and the cruel suggestion made her tears gush out afresh, and blanched still more her faded cheek.

However, it was a sort of comfort to

her to find herself again in her little delightful room ; and after the warm bath her mother had judiciously recommended, she stole into her dear little bed, and slept till it was time to dress for the *soirée dansante* at Mrs. De Vere's.

CHAPTER. XII.

GERALDINE.

THE reader must accompany us to a mansion in Grosvenor Square—the mansion of Sir Trevor Templeton, Bart.

Sir Trevor Templeton—his lady and his daughter, Geraldine, with Mr. Mercy, *pro tem* Rector of Richlands, and domestic chaplain to Sir Trevor—had arrived at this mansion, from the Continent, the day before.

Lady Templeton, still very delicate, was asleep on the sofa after dinner. Geraldine,

no longer the squint-eyed, shock-headed, freckled Tom-boy, but one of the loveliest and most refined of the daughters of Eve, was dressed for an evening party, and arranging her beautiful bouquet.

But can this be Geraldine! those large, lustrous eyes have no squint !

No, that deformity a very clever Italian oculist has removed by the operation called strabismus—often a failure, but, in this instance, perfectly successful. The shock head of red hair is no more—the tresses are very long, very abundant, silken and rippled, and have ripened into a rich and exquisite auburn. The in-door life of Italy in the day-time, has restored the natural fairness of a skin once discolored and freckled by riding in all weathers. The form is perfection—the brow beams with intelligence—the mouth is archly sweet—a foreign grace is united to the most perfect English beauty—the “*art de la toilette*,” never acquired except

abroad, lends its aid to enhance every charm.

Mr. Mercy, who enters at this moment, and who knows that that exquisite form is a casket containing gems of the purest water, which it has been his pride and privilege to polish, thinks that earth does not contain anything half so perfect as Geraldine Templeton.

But the Rev. William Mercy's thoughts on that subject have never passed his pale lips. It has ever been his pleasure and his duty to unfurl, before the upraised eyes of her whom he found so thoughtless a worldling, the standard, bearing, the magic word "*excelsior*." Never has he let her think she *had* done, or ever could do, enough! never has he let her forget that, at best, she was an unprofitable servant.

A rich color rushed to her cheek at his well-known step, and her bosom throbbed at his dear voice; but he approached with

downcast eyes, for he did not wish to be moved or dazzled by her beauty—and she was glad he should not note the emotion she could not conceal.

“And so,” she said, affecting a playful tone, “you are quite resolved not to go with us to-night. You will launch me, without my pilot, on all the perils of the sea of fashion. Well, if any evil befalls me, don’t forget I begged you to go.”

“No evil will befall you—your own heart is your best pilot.”

“A young lady’s heart her best pilot? There is a wild new paradox.”

“Not an ordinary young lady’s heart.”

“Oh come, you do not think me an *ordinary* young lady.”

“No! not in any sense of the word; but be not angry with me, I cannot bear these crowded solitudes. I feel quite out of place among giddy dancers—and—”

“Well, but for once—to oblige me.”

“I have promised to spend this night by a sick bed.”

“Oh, then I would not ask you to go with me, I only wish I could share your vigils. How much rather would I go with you,” said Geraldine. “How odious—how frivolous will an evening spent in ‘flatteries paid to fellow worms,’ seem to me, when I think I might be helping *you*, in the discharge of so holy, so sacred a duty.”

The Rev. William Mercy all but extended his hand—his impulse was to open his arms—but he did neither—he turned away that the tear in his eye might escape notice—trusted, honored, received as he was by Sir Trevor Templeton, and knowing as he did, what pride was centred in this his only child—his heiress—and his darling—he would not try to win her affection—he loved her—and many things whispered to his heart that he might ob-

tain her, and yet he struggled against her innocent and beautiful affection, because he would not be ungrateful, nor play a double part.

He bore to hear Geraldine sigh, and to know that she wiped away a tear. And as Lady Trevor awoke, he resumed his seat by her couch, and began to read a work on a serious subject, in which she was much interested.

Sir Trevor shortly after came in, saying—

“Come, Geraldine, it is time to be off! you know we have to call in Hanover Square for your chaperone, Lady Mildmay—I have been to your cousin’s club, and his lodgings, but could not find him—I hear he is in town—and, of course, if he sees our arrival in the papers—he will hasten to call on us. Are you not curious to see him? Your old play-fellow, and little husband, as we all used to call him.”

"I never called him so, papa," said Geraldine, turning very red, while an ashy paleness stole over Mr. Mercy's cheek. "I never was very fond of Trevor—he used to tease all my pets so much—and was not at all kind to animals—not even his own pony. However, he was a boy then, only if 'the boy is father to the man' I do not think I shall like him very much—and I am quite sure he detested me."

"Ah, but you were a very provoking, saucy, mischievous imp then, with your freckles, your little cast in the eye, and your carrotty poll. There is not a trace of Gerry the Tom-boy in Miss Geraldine Templeton, the travelled and finished lady. I don't think he will detest you now," added the father, with a proud smile, as Geraldine rose in her graceful and stately beauty, to let her maid put on her little, scarlet velvet, hooded cloak, in which,

with its white lining and graceful folds, she looked "beautiful exceedingly."

"Mercy, my dear fellow," said Sir Trevor, "how very ungallant you are; why don't you go and help the girl."

"I am no adept in such matters," said Mr. Mercy, remaining by Lady Trevor's side; "I might disturb a braid, or dislodge a pin, or commit some incurable depredation."

"William Mercy is the best nurse in the world," said Lady Trevor, taking his hand gently and kindly; "if he wants a character, I can give him one, as a nurse, though we cannot say much for him, as a lady's-maid, or a squire of dames."

"Well I will forgive his not shining as the one, while he is such a treasure to you, beloved mamma, and indeed to all of us as the other said Geraldine; Papa *will* have me go to this party and little as I like it now, how much *more* distasteful would it be to

me, if I did not leave our best and dearest friend by your side mamma!"

Geraldine held out her hand—William Mercy was obliged to take it—Lady Trevor clasped them both in hers. She did not see that, as she did so, their eyes met and filled with tears; and that the deepest crimson suffused their averted faces.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OLD LOVE AND THE NEW.

MRS. DE VERE'S party, like all fashionable London parties, was very hot, very crowded, and very noisy ; lively music, and the buzz of men's voices met the ear long before the guests could make their way up the crowded staircase. A strong odour of geraniums prevailed, it came from the bouquets of the dancers, and was triumphant

even over the *millefleurs* and *Tubereuse* of the chaperones.

The dancing was at its height ; beautiful girls in white draperies, of gossamer texture, across which the freshest flowers were gracefully flung, flitted by, with, moustachiod beaux, of 'crack' regiments, animated glancing foreigners, or silent gazing Englishmen, who went through the liveliest polka, without moving a muscle of their sedate Anglo-Saxon countenances.

Jewelled, rouged and pearl-powdered dowagers clustered in corners, talking scandal with each other, or engaged in a *fade* sort of habitual flirtation with the old beaux of the party—old at least, according to Burke ; though no one is allowed to *look* old in a London ball room ; odd and unnatural people *may* look—but the venerable beauty of age, (and age, like winter has very great beauties of its own,) are not to be seen where art so completely banishes nature.

Geraldine and her father, with her chaperon lady Mildmay, entered the rooms just as the dance ceased. Geraldine was not only by far the most *distinguée* and loveliest person present, but she was perfectly *new*—and the sensation she excited, even among the listless *blazés habitués* of a London ball room was very great !

Her foreign elegance of dress, and manner, added new charms to her perfection of aristocratic English beauty, her perfect freedom from affectation, her classic grace, and lively interest in a scene so new to her, (an interest which dawned in her eyes and slightly flushed her cheeks)—All the guests approached as near as good-breeding permitted, and the flattering buzz of, “who is she ”? became audible.

About the same time, and while old friends, recognizing Sir Trevor, crowded round our party, and the choicest beaux begged to be introduced to his daughter, yes, at the very same time, one who at one

time, created no small sensation, herself, when *she* entered a ball-room, glided in leaning on her mother's arm—and by chance was hurried, close to the side of the brilliant *débutante*.

It was Blanche Ashton!—but so wan, so pale, so wasted! that no one among her former slight acquaintances of the London season, recognized her at all!

She sank on a seat close to the 'cynosure of neighb'ring eyes,' and Geraldine, declining to dance the polka just then beginning, sate beside her—what a contrast they formed! and oh how much greater it became—when a very handsome, elegant and *frank looking* young man, suddenly hastening across the room he had just entered—eagerly introduced himself into the charmed circle of the Armida of the evening, and after heartily shaking hands with Sir Trevor Templeton, was by him, introduced, as his nephew Trevor Templeton, to his old play-fellow Gerry, in the stately beauty, on

whom he had been gazing with respectful rapture but without the slightest recognition.

Tremblingly, poor Blanche awaited the moment when his eye should turn on her, and thankful was she, that a conversation with a lady, at a little distance about Isabel's marriage, and Penelope's engagement, prevented her mother from claiming Trevor Templeton's acquaintance!

Gay and lively was the conversation between the cousins; it reached poor Blanche's ear, with all its, to her, maddening features, and torturing tributes of praise and wonder!

At length, Trevor *did* turn to pick up a blossom from Geraldine's bouquet--at length, his eye did fall on Blanche, and without the slightest gleam of recognition, turned away—*He did not know her, and she saw that he did not*—a little cry of surprise and pain, burst from her white lips, and Blanche

in the middle of all that brilliant crowd—without one arm being extended to save her, or one hand to help—fell heavily on the floor in a death-like swoon.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MORAL COWARD.

OF course the consternation was great—Geraldine hastened with Trevor and many others, to raise the slight form of one, whose face was as the face of the dead—so ghastly was its pallor, and so deep the hollows, which early care and disappointed love, had scooped beneath the soft blue eyes.

Mrs. Ashton rushed through the crowd, and seeing Blanche in Trevor's arms, while Geraldine supported her drooping head, she said—

“ This is as it should be, Trevor ! I am glad to see you here—carry her into the ante-room, the air will revive her, and I will then trouble you to call our carriage, and to see us home.”

Trevor (rather a poltroon at heart) was completely awed and taken aback, as the vulgar say, by the air Mrs. Ashton assumed. He carried Blanche through the crowd into a little ante-room appropriated to ice eaters and lemonade drinkers, and placed her on a sofa. Geraldine had kindly followed with Blanche's bouquet and handkerchief, and a locket which had dropped from her chain. Trevor saw it in her hand, and recognised it at once as a gift of his own.

The room had been hastily vacated for

Blanche's use—no one was present but Mrs. Ashton, Trevor Templeton, Geraldine, and poor Blanche herself. Geraldine bathed her temples with *eau-de-Cologne*, and Trevor, kneeling beside her, fanned her violently. Suddenly Blanche opened her eyes, beheld Trevor kneeling at her side—uttered a wild cry of surprise and joy—held out her wasted arms in unconscious tenderness, and letting her head fall on his shoulder, burst into tears, saying—

“ Oh! are you come at last, Trevor, *dear*, *dear* Trevor? you *are* come ; but I fear it is too late.”

At this moment Sir Trevor Templeton looked in, in search of Geraldine, and Mrs. Ashton, who knew him by sight, said—

“ Excuse me, Sir Trevor Templeton, for introducing myself ; but your nephew is a very old and intimate friend of ours, and the scene you now witness must be explained on some future and more fitting

occasion. Trevor," she added, "call our carriage, and oblige me by seeing us home."

Trevor, in great confusion, and his natural impudence quite deserting him, slunk away in search of the carriage. Geraldine, having conceived a great liking for poor Blanche, whose story she read on her faded cheek, and whose fate she foretold from her knowledge of Trevor, begged her father to introduce her to Mrs. Ashton and asked leave to call the next day to enquire after Blanche. Mrs. Ashton graciously consented ; Trevor returned, gave his arm to Blanche, who even with its aid could scarcely support herself, and sneakingly escorted Mrs. Ashton to the carriage.

Mrs. Ashton assumed the airs of the haughty and injured parent, and poor Blanche, who little understood her real position, when she found herself in the carriage by the side of her long lost Trevor, let her head fall on his shoulder while large

tears silently chased each other down her cheeks.

Arrived at Ashton Lodge, and having handed the ladies out, Trevor was for retreating ; but Mrs. Ashton took his arm, and so forcibly impelled him to attend her into the dining-room that he had no choice.

Blanche sank on the sofa, and covered her face with her hands.

“ I am glad you are come at last, Trevor Templeton,” said Mrs. Ashton, “ a little longer delay, and it might have been too late.”

“ I really am quite at a loss to know what you mean Mrs. Ashton !” said Trevor, fairly nettled at last.

“ Mean !” cried the mother, “ why I mean that after taking the most assiduous pains to win the affections of that poor girl, you have heartlessly left her for months in anxiety and suspense, and that, if you had not returned as you have done, to claim her at last, I should have considered you the

basest and most treacherous of men, and have denounced you as such."

"Oh, mamma," sobbed Blanche, "do not say an unkind word to him; is he not come back? Do not embitter this blissful season, by any reproaches. I freely forgive him for any sorrow or anxiety he has caused me; he never meant to be unkind; he never thinks—but I forgive him, and you must do the same."

"That will depend entirely on the course he now pursues," said Mrs. Ashton, "if he is come to claim your hand and to fulfil all he has *implied* if not positively *expressed* by his exclusive attentions to you, I can and will receive him as my son, and forget all the anxiety he has cost us both."

"Really," said Trevor, atlast, "there seems to be some most absurd misunderstanding; I never concealed my circumstances; I never committed myself in any way. I liked the society of Miss Blanche Ashton just as others did that of her sisters—

(to wit Bernard Brydges and Captain Beresford) but she always knew that my prospects depended upon my degree ; and that my uncle fully intended me to marry his daughter ! what groundless expectations my innocent attentions here may have given rise to—I cannot understand—since I always thought my position was too well known to admit of an *équivoque* on that point—I felt myself too uncertain and bad a match for any girl but my cousin.”

“ Enough, sir,” said Mrs. Ashton, pale with all a mother’s wrath and a woman’s injured pride, leave this house—“but do not imagine that you will go unpunished—Do not think you shall walk to the altar with the cousin you have so ridiculed, misrepresented and abused, over the grave of my broken-hearted girl ! My disgust and indignation at your heartless treachery, and unblushing effrontery, are such, that I will conquer my own delicacy, and even sacrifice hers, and bring your matchless per-

fidly into a Court of Law. Whatever you may think, cautious and watchful as you have been, a very good case of "Breach of Promise"—but at the words Trevor rose in real alarm, which he tried to conceal by an air of indignant surprise; and poor Blanche, who had been stupefied with horror at her mother's (to her) astounding threats, and most indelicate allusions, tried to rise from the sofa and approach them where they stood; but the effort and the excitement were too much for her, she uttered a faint shriek, and fell back—Mrs. Ashton rushed to her assistance, and Trevor Templeton, without waiting to see what was the matter, effected his retreat.

Heartless as he was, he could not have done so had he perceived the catastrophe which had happened—Blanche in the agony of true love, her terror, and her shame at the course her mother was pursuing, had broken a blood-vessel; the scarlet flood dyed her white dress, and her mother,

unable to leave her, shrieked aloud! Trevor *did* hear that shriek, as he closed the street door after him; but he recognised Mrs. Ashton's voice and thought it was only a *ruse* to detain him!

At last the mother's cries brought the servants to the spot; medical aid was soon procured; life saved for a time, at least; and the strictest quiet both for mind and body, commanded and enforced—but though she lay motionless and white, as 'monumental alabaster,' what mental quiet could there be for poor Blanche, who, owing to her mother's most injudicious and indelicate revenge, had, added to her hopeless love, a burning, maddening sense of shame!

The beautiful Geraldine called the next day, and though she was not admitted to visit the poor sufferer, she had a long interview with Mrs. Ashton, in which that lady took good care to impress upon her, the sense, she really herself entertained of the base, cruel, and unblushing treachery of

Trevor Templeton—Geraldine listened and believed ; she had never liked Trevor, she had always shuddered at any intimation from her father, of his wish to promote a match between her cousin and herself ; she had her own secret and insurmountable reasons for determining never to be his wife—but she was not sorry that the father she loved and respected, should consider her fully justified in a decided refusal, of the proposal she foresaw.

Her charms, so great and so unexpected, from the little promise of her early childhood, had made a great impression on Trevor's volatile heart ; and a passionate wish to please and win her for himself, was now added to the promptings of self-interest and the inducements of ambition.

He now began bitterly to repent that he had wasted so much time, for Sir Trevor made his degree *a sine qua non*, in even permitting him to address his daughter.

With regard to Blanche ; Trevor thought

it would be his best and wisest course *frankly* (or as he called it) *frankly*, to tell his uncle how Mrs. Ashton and her daughter, had misunderstood and overrated the attentions, he had been weak and silly enough to pay to a pretty girl who had been thrown in his way, and had done all she could to ensnare him—

He prided himself very much, or rather appeared to do so, knowing the straightforward, honourable character of his uncle, on having always proclaimed to the Ashtons his exact position, his dependence on his uncle, his situation with regard to his cousin, and the fact that his very possession of the Rectory of Richlands depended on the degree, which they saw he was in no hurry to take.

“If,” said his uncle, “if all this is exactly as you state, and I think no Templeton would be guilty of misrepresentation, then are you, my dear boy, far more sinned against than sinning; and though I

feel very sorry for that pretty, delicate, snow-drop Love seems to have so untimely cropped, yet I must say it serves the mother right ; for it is evident she has been manœuvering—and that without much talent for the odious science—The young thing I dare say loves you, and is to be pitied ; but with regard to a case of ‘ Breach of Promise,’—you having always told them how you stood—’tis ridiculous, and the old girl hasn’t a leg to stand upon. So come, my dear boy, and let us go and have a canter in the park with Gerry your old play-mate—that is if she is come in from her daily, and very long visit to that canting old husband-hunter, and the poor little girl.”

Geraldine was come in ; but she was telling the piteous tale of Blanche’s broken heart, and ruined hopes, to her mother and Mr. Mercy, and she was not at all disposed, burning as she was with indignation against

the heartless destroyer of poor Blanche's peace, to gratify his vanity and his sudden and insolent passion for herself, by exhibiting herself in the park with him.

It was painful to Geraldine to deny her father any request he made ; but she read such approbation in the earnest eyes of Mr. Mercy, at her refusing to encourage the hopes, and gratify the vanity of one who had played so base and cruel a part—that worst but most unpunishable of felons—he who has stolen a woman's first fond love, merely to cast it away—that Geraldine was firm.

And so Sir Trevor Templeton and his nephew went out together, and Geraldine, who had that day seen poor Blanche, and felt convinced that the hand of Death was on her, proceeded to unfold a scheme she had been maturing in her own mind for procuring to the stricken girl the unspeakable comfort of the attendance of one fitted

above all others to smooth her path, and prepare her way to a better world—namely William Mercy.

Geraldine had gently hinted, to Mrs. Ashton, her wish that Blanche should enjoy the inestimable blessing of the spiritual instruction, comfort and advice of this young but most experienced, and most gifted Pastor.

But at the idea of a clergyman's visits Mrs. Ashton, linking, immediate, or at any rate fast approaching and certain death, with such a visitor—had burst into agonies of grief, and gone off into violent hysterics; but Geraldine was not to be deterred from a holy purpose by folly and weakness such as this! She would not sacrifice Blanche's eternal happiness to a prejudice sure to pass away. She argued, she comforted, she implored; she pointed out the necessity for those who are to *live* as well as those who are to *die*, to be at peace with God, and

firm in their reliance on His blessed Son, the only Mediator.

“If any thing can save your darling child,” said Geraldine, wiping away her own tears at the mention of the contingency implied, “it will be the holy calm which must succeed her reconciliation with God. She has lived, poor girl, for the creature rather than the Creator. Oh let her know what treasures are yet in store for her living or dying! what has she lost if she find that peace which passeth all understanding. The pearl of price is offered to her! Do not *you*, her mother, prevent her accepting it!”

Geraldine was far too much in earnest not to succeed, and William Mercy was permitted daily to accompany her in her visits to the sick, it might be the dying girl. Indeed though her mother obstinately refused to believe in her danger, and was busily, (though privately engaged in consulting lawyers and making

out a case of 'Breach of Promise,' to all other eyes it was evident that Blanche *was* dying.

She thought so herself—she felt it was so—but since William Mercy had been permitted to attend her, since she had listened to him, and to the Bible, as explained by him—all fretful regret and fear of death had left her.

She now, for the first time, saw life in its true colors. She began for the first time to *live*, just when all around her proclaimed she was about to die, and *she was happy*—happier far than she had ever been in the day-dawn of happiness, and the brief illusion of vanity. Her soul was full of forgiveness. She forgave freely, because she felt her need of being freely forgiven, and William Mercy had explained to her the conditions of her pardon.

Lovely, for lovelier than in her first bloom, she lay in her white wrapper, and little lace cap, a cropped snow-drop, as Sir

Trevor Templeton had not inaptly called her. Her mother, seeing her so calm, believed her convalescent, and was preparing to take her to Baden, to meet Sir Hector and Isabel, but Blanche felt that a longer and a happier journey was before her, and she troubled herself with no preparations for any other.

As she felt herself grow daily *stronger* and *weaker*, stronger in spirit and faith, and weaker in bodily health, she began to long to embrace, once more, those dear sisters, whose promising career of earthly brightness she would not now have bartered for her own far better prospects ; and though she shrank from casting a shade over the joy of the bride, and that of the Bride Elect, she had begun calmly to discuss with Geraldine and William Mercy, the propriety of gradually preparing them for the tidings they must receive ere long.

And all this time Trevor was growing daily more odious to Geraldine, but endear-

ing himself to his uncle, as he spent his time between attendance on him and on a first-rate tutor who was endeavouring in Oxford slang, to "coach and cram," him for his fast approaching examination.

However, there was so much to be done, and so much time to be made up, that it was rather rail-way than coach speed, for Trevor, along the classic road ; and after all, his tutor had no very sanguine hopes ; for what we learn so quickly we easily forget, and visions of a pluck danced before the weary eyes of tutor and pupil.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HONEY MOON.

THE Bride and Bridegroom, meanwhile, little imagining what is passing at Ashton Lodge, (for owing to the uncertainty of their movements, no tidings have reached them), are growing daily more delighted with their fate, with each other, and themselves.

They have not forgotten their promise to receive Mrs. Ashton and Blanche at Baden-Baden, but so much do they dread an interruption of their enchanting seclusion, and blissful *tete-a-tete*, that, as if by mutual consent, they prolong their happy wanderings and postpone yet a little while, and again a little while, the meeting they had themselves proposed, and still fully intended to carry out.

These new "Pilgrims of the Rhine," linger in all the loveliest strong-holds of history, poetry and romance; Isabel is never weary of hearing Sir Hector's animated version of this legend or that fairy tale, and fills up the intervals between their delightful *causeries* (for even Brides and Bridegrooms must sometimes be alone, or at least ought to be so, lest they grow weary of their "sameness of joy," by a tale, she is herself engaged in writing, descriptive of the lovely scenes she is enjoying so

fully—and the proceeds of which are to be devoted to everything that can restore Blanche to health, peace and comfort.

But “*L’homme propose et Dieu dispose*,” and Blanche, even had she known all the little plans for her comfort and recovery which Sir Hector and Isabel delighted to form, would not now relinquish her hopes of Heaven for the realisation of all she had most coveted on earth—Trevor Templeton’s love, and a home with him at the Rectory!

Mrs. Ashton had taken great care not to disturb what she thought Penelope’s happy courtship by any real account of her sister’s state. Indeed the mother still obstinately refused to see a danger daily more and more apparent. The doctor on whom she most depended, was one who never gave an unfavorable opinion, particularly to a lady, one who never mentioned *death* to ears polite, but always evaded,

prevaricated, and deceived—a cruel mercy !—which he considered in the light that papists do their pious frauds, but which though meant to spare the feelings of loving relatives, only, in the end, exposed them to a hideous shock and a cruel and because a sudden, perhaps an incurable anguish.

Ah, had Penelope known how solemn a change to all appearance awaited the sister who had shared with her all the vanities of life, perhaps she would have taken warning, (even while she stood on the giddy precipice of passion,) and have retreated while it was yet time. Mrs. Addington's favorite Ruth is staying a good deal with her, and in spite of the captivation of Penelope's manners, and her wish to conciliate the esteem of the Good, so common to those who feel they are in error, Ruth does not like, or rather she does not approve of Miss Ashton.

Too generous to speak ill of one whom she cannot but consider a successful rival, Ruth, in her conversations with Mrs. Addington, makes it a duty to construe as favourably as possible all the words and actions of the Bride Elect ; she tries to see all that Miss Ashton does and says, through a favorable medium ; and though she cannot but think she makes too great a display of her fine person, too great a study of the toilette, and too great an effort to please and shine, when *He* is not present—(the one to whom in Ruth's opinion every charm and every good gift ought to be entirely devoted)—yet is she rife in excuses, and extenuations when the anxious mother foretels the miseries of a coquettish wife and an ill-regulated home, for the son she adores.

“Remember,” would Ruth say, “remember she has been brought up to make the most of her great advantages, and had

she been less dazzling, less fascinating, she would not perhaps have inspired in George the passion which seems to make him so intensely happy."

"Ah, it makes him happy now," said the mother, "now that he sees everything, through a false medium—now that he only beholds her dressed up in finery, and smiles—always in company—always excited—always, it seems to me, (and God forgive me if I wrong her) acting a part ! but how will it be when they live in a quiet English home together?"

"Ah, that they never will do," said Ruth, "no quiet English home will ever suit her."

"And no other *can* suit him," said the mother, with a sigh ; "but oh, Ruth ! far worse than her love of dress—worse than her general wish to captivate and to dazzle, is the sort of secret flirtation I cannot but suspect between her and this

Bernard Brydges, of whom our poor Dora seems so very fond. I suspect he little dreams that the fortune which, of course, is Dora's great attraction with him, depends, after all, on her marrying with her brother's consent ; and I do not believe that anything will induce George to put her, weak and romantic as she is, into the power of a mere fortune-hunter."

"You think it quite impossible he should have any real liking for poor Dora?" said Ruth, who tried, on principle, to see some good in every one.

"Quite—and I wish that were all—I see in addition to his not really liking poor Dora, (as how should he? accustomed as he is to all the most accomplished belles of the London world of fashion,) I see with dismay, what he vainly tries to conceal, that he is in love, as far as such a coxcomb can be, with my son's 'Bride Elect ;' and being more experienced

and more suspicious than you, my dear girl, I have gathered from their glances inuendoes and other trifling indications that there has been an attachment between them; and I am very, very much afraid, though I would not believe her so base as to suppose she encourages it now,* but I am very much afraid, that in her inmost heart, he is still dear to her. Now, I do not dare, of course, to give the slightest hint of this dreadful suspicion to my darling son—not only would it rouse him to great wrath against me, but it might destroy his peace of mind for ever, and, perhaps, without sufficient cause; but I assure you, my dear girl, I am so miserable at the aspect of affairs—so full of a watchful distrust, I cannot conquer—and so anxious about George's happiness in the case either of his marrying or resigning her, that my life, which used to be so calm and peaceful, is become quite a

burthen to me! Oh, that he had chosen a wife I could trust and love—oh, Ruth !—”

And, as she spoke, poor Mrs. Addington almost unconsciously opened her arms, and Ruth, the calm, the self-possessed, the disappointed Ruth, felt all that that movement implied, and wept upon her bosom.

And while she wept, gay voices were heard under the window, and Mrs. Addington and Ruth rose hastily, and looked down upon the terrace, shrouded by the curtains. Bernard Brydges was gaily laughing and talking with Dora; and Mr. Addington was walking pensively with his Bride Elect.

Mrs. Addington saw Penelope pause, and desire her lover to gather a beautiful rose, which grew above her reach; while he did so, and unperceived by him, she took a note from her bosom, thrust it in

a crevice in the wall, and hid it with a few leaves.

Mr. Addington gave her the rose, embracing her tenderly as he did so—and, for sometime, the two couples continued to pace up and down the terrace.

As Penelope placed that note in the crevice, Mrs. Addington's eyes met Ruth's. Mrs. Addington was crimson with angry suspicion—Ruth, pale as death, tearful and trembling.

“Now, what can that mean?” said Mrs. Addington; “surely there must be some false dealing there.”

“Oh, God grant it may not be so,” said Ruth, clasping her hands.

“I am determined to ascertain the point,” said Mrs. Addington, and she hastened down stairs as fast as her lameness would allow.

“Do nothing rash, dear friend,” said Ruth; “it may be nothing after all.”

Mrs. Addington was on the terrace—she approached the spot—the lovers were at the other end of the walk—she thrust her hand into the crevice.

The note was gone.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COUNTERPLOT.

Mrs ADDINGTON, disappointed and defeated, but not at all the less convinced, that there was some foul play intended, hastened back to the pale and trembling Ruth.

“I am determined to convict her yet,” said the agitated mother; “if she is capable of carrying on a vile flirtation, not to

say intrigue, with that Bernard Brydges—think of the fate of my son !”

“ It is impossible,” said Ruth ; “ perhaps it was some surprise intended for Mr. Addington himself. She may be vain—she may be frivolous ; but what you suspect her of, would make her vile. It cannot be.”

“ Ah ! Ruth, you do not know how rapid is the descent, how slippery the downward path. If a woman is once thoroughly vain and thoroughly frivolous, it is so easy, so very easy for her to become vile. He shall not be duped—he shall not throw away his noble heart—if he kill me for it, I will undeceive him, and arouse him from his trance !” said Mrs. Addington, bitterly,

Ruth knew not how to comfort her ; indeed, her own mind was darkened by suspicion. Charitable as she was, she had that strong common sense which often supplies the place of experience, and in her inmost heart, she did suspect Penelope.

The time of the wedding was drawing very near, and the mysterious influence of Bernard Brydges still prevailed to prevent Penelope from breaking off a match more than ever odious to her. Whether that wretched influence would have induced her to perjure herself at the altar, to vow to love, honour, and obey one man, while her whole heart was engrossed by its wild idolatry of another, we cannot say, since the Providence that watches over the Good, slumbered but did not sleep. However, as yet, every thing goes well with the deceivers. Mrs. Addington, no great adept at a *ruse*, had determined to unravel the mystery, to cut the gordian knot she could not untie—to expose Penelope, and, as she hoped, disenchant her Intended.

Suddenly, after dinner, during one of those perplexing pauses in the conversation, when no one knows what to say—fearing what he says will scarcely deserve the attention it will excite, Mrs. Addington—

ton, in a solemn voice—her stern brow growing sterner and sterner, and her pale cheek waxing whiter and whiter—said,

“ Miss Ashton, I saw you from my window, insert a note in a crevice, which note, you covered with some leaves. There was something so strange and inexplicable in the manœuvre, that I am impelled to ask you what that note was.”

To Mrs. Addington’s surprise, and to that of Ruth also, Penelope burst out laughing, in which fit of merriment, she was joined by Addington, while Bernard Brydges grew ghastly pale—he scarce knew why—and Dora tittered, as she always did, when she saw any one else laugh.

“ Mr. Addington will explain that mystery, my dear madam !” said Penelope, rather hastily.

“ Why, what did you suspect that note to be, mother ?” said Mr. Addington, rather angrily ; “ by the solemnity of your

tone, any one would suppose you had detected a conspiracy against the State."

"What I feared, George, was far more important to me than that."

"And what did you fear, madam?" said Penelope, to whom Bernard Brydges had conveyed, by a glance, an intimation that she ought to show some resentment at the suspicion implied.

"What could you fear, madam?" said Mr. Addington—for the first time in his life calling his mother madam ; while, also, for the first time in his life, his eyes flashed angrily at her, and his voice trembled with rage, and where duty and love had ever been anger and defiance now glared.

"George! George! do not look at me so—do not speak to me so! Oh! my son—my dear son, if I have wronged her, it is my love for you has made me do so. But that note—oh! my poor George."

"Shew your mother the note, George," said Penelope, startled at the wild, eccentric

manner of one usually so dignified and composed. "Nay, you must—you shall ;" and going playfully up to him, she snatched it from his waistcoat-pocket. "Look, Mrs. Addington. It is only a trick of mine—a few verses I hid, and then made George find, as if by accident. It is all nonsense ; but I thought it would please him."

"I beg, my dear Penelope," said Mr. Addington, with a sort of authority in his voice. "you will not demean yourself by any further explanation or excuses. What my mother can mean, or can have meant, I am at a loss to imagine. I can only fancy that she is not well—and has been acting under some temporary irritation or delusion."

"I am not well, George—I am not well," said Mrs. Addington, in a piteous voice, touchingly contrasted with her ordinary tone of dignified composure. "I am not well—I know not what I meant—what I feared ; but I beg your pardon, Miss Ash-

ton—and yours, my dear—dear George. Come—come to me.”

As she spoke, she extended her arms ; they fell lifeless to her side ; her eyes were fixed—her jaw dropped.

Her son rushed to her, and caught her in his arms. All the ladies crowded round her ; but Ruth alone perceived the real state of the case ; from her constant attendance on the sick and the poor, she was experienced in such matters ; and when Mr. Addington, in a paroxysm of filial terror and remorse, exclaimed,

“ Oh ! God ! Oh ! my mother—my dear, dear mother, she is dying.”

“ Ruth gently said, “ send off at once for Mr. B—It is a paralytic attack, but be comforted ; it is only a slight one, and I have not only seen very much worse, but I have been with your dear mother, when she has been attacked almost as violently.”

“ And never told me ! ” said Mr. Addington, almost reproachfully.

“She would not allow me to do so ; but Mr. B— has seen her so before, and fully understands her case—At present all we can do, is to keep her and ourselves as quiet as possible,”

Ruth gently helped to place Mrs. Addington on a sofa, darkened the room, and induced the weeping Dora, and the pallid Bernard, and Penelope to leave the room ; Mr. Addington remained by his mother’s side, with a heart full of filial love and filial remorse.

It was so terrible to him to think, as his mother lay stretched unconscious and ghastly before him, that his last look at her, had been one of anger, his last words those of defiance and reproach.

Ruth said all she could to comfort and re-assure him ; and for the first time since his passion for Penelope had engrossed all his thoughts and feelings, he remarked how sweet and soothing was the voice of Ruth ; how dove-like her eyes ; how

heavenly her smile. For the first time Penelope was absent, and he did not miss her—It was not very long in reality, though it seemed terribly so to the son, before Mr. B— came.

He pronounced the attack a severe one, compared to those with which he had attended Mrs. Addington before; but he gave good hope of a speedy recovery. He ordered his patient to be carried to her room, and dismissed Mr. Addington, telling him he would send for him, should any important change take place.

The gentle and judicious aid of Ruth, he seemed to covet, and Mr. Addington somewhat re-assured, seeing Penelope sitting pale and musing under a tree on the lawn, approached her, and gave her an account of the opinion of the medical man.

Penelope had been weeping very bitterly—her tears at that moment were far dearer to her lover, than any smiles could have been; not that he understood their meaning or could trace them to their real source.

For the first time, the consequences of her actions had dawned on Penelope's mind—for the first time, slumbering conscience had been awakened by the terrible shock she had received from Mrs. Addington's alarming fit—‘oh! if she should die,’ thought the miserable girl, ‘I am her murderer’—all pride in the counter-manceuvre by which she had outwitted the anxious mother—was lost in the sense of terror, degradation, and disgust at herself.

By the light of the electric shock she had received, she for a moment, saw her own conduct in its true light—what a pity that it was but for a moment! else what might she not have been spared of shame, of anguish, and remorse!—

Mr. Addington, as he saw her tears fall like rain, passed his arm round her waist, and said “Oh Penelope, pray with me that we may not have to weep for that best of mothe s! Oh my love! may she be spared

many, many years, to see how she has wronged you, and to rejoice in our happiness."

Penelope sobbed, but she could not say 'Amen.'

Ere long, Ruth appeared with words of comfort—Mrs. Addington was better, she was conscious ; she had asked for her son—

He rose, and followed Ruth—Penelope was again alone—and then she thought over what had passed, but in shame, not in triumph. She had escaped conviction before others, but there was one witness she could not escape—*Conscience!*

Her quick eye had detected poor old Mrs. Addington's search in the crevice of the wall ; she understood in an instant, that she had been seen from the windows above, and that she was suspected—she knew that Bernard had taken the note from the crevice, and therefore imagining what might follow, she hastily substituted some verses she had written for him, and

led Mr. Addington, playfully, and as if by accident, to seek for that she had secreted.

All this had been cleverly managed, and she was pleased at the time, at the success of her own counter-plot ; but now her awakened conscience showed her only her degradation as a deceiver—not her address as a manœuverer !

What a poor, wretched triumph it was to deceive, however skilfully, the honest heart that so trusted her, so delighted and gloried in her.

What would she have given never to have embarked with Bernard on those troubled waters !

*“ On peut être plus fin qu’ un autre
Mais pas plus fin que tous les autres.”*

And not only has she the misery of feeling that she is a deceiver, but the mortifi-

cation of suspecting that she is herself deceived. She cannot understand Bernard's policy, she only sees it is a crooked policy, she only feels that she loves him, and therefore is his victim and his slave.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CONVALESCENT.

MRS. ADDINGTON recovered rapidly ; the devotion of her son, whose attentions were, for the first time, quickened by remorse, soon restored her to her wonted state. She tried all she could to atone to Penelope for the offence she had given. She tried to like, and trust her, and the effort, as such efforts always do, failed.

She could not believe in Penelope's love

for her son, and while she doubted of that nothing else had a charm for her ; she often followed the quiet movements of Ruth with tearful eyes, and wished, with a wish that was almost a prayer, that she might yet see her son's bride.

But of this there seemed little chance, or hope now. The wedding-day was fixed, and Mr. Addington was going to London to make final arrangements, and to see Mrs. Ashton on the subject.

The evening before his intended departure Penelope had written to Bernard Brydges, insisting on a meeting early the next morning. She appointed the place, and she determined to tell him her resolution to break off her match with Mr. Addington ; and to insist on Bernard's leaving her for ever unless he chose to accept the sacrifice she was eager to make, and to elope with her himself.

This of course she did not intend to propose to him ; but only so to act that he

should be obliged to propose it to her, when they met in the morning.

But a much more important meeting had been arranged by Bernard Brydges.

Penelope's note, he, after one impatient glance, consigned to his pocket, intending to take the first opportunity of destroying it. He answered it only by an affirmative nod, by which he meant Penelope to understand that he would meet her. This note, he, for the cunning are often very careless, forgot to take out of his pocket; it fell into the hands of the man who brushed his clothes. He handed it at once to a maid, with whom he was flirting, and who being a shrewd girl, and having long suspected a flirtation in that quarter, (for servants are rarely, if ever, deceived in such matters), fathomed the whole intrigue at a glance.

She took the note to Mrs. Addington's maid, who in her turn carried it to her mistress.

What the exact result was we do not

know, but Mr. Addington did not set off early the next morning, as he had intended.

Penelope, pale, agitated, and tearful, was betimes at the tyrsting place she herself had appointed. It was a summer-house that overlooked the road to London. She waited for some time in miserable anxiety and impatience, and Bernard Brydges did not come ! she began to fear he had deceived her !

Burning shame dyed her cheeks ; anger and despair lighted her eyes, and fired her breast. She was about to leave the spot when the sound of carriage wheels in the road beneath, attracted her attention ; a post-chaise and four dashed by ; the blinds were drawn down ; but one was suddenly raised, and the silly face of Dora looked up at the summer-house. Yes, Dora waived her hand triumphantly to the Bride Elect. Bernard Brydges shrank back in the carriage, and hastily pulled down the blind. Penelope did not see his face, but she did

see his hand ; his white kid glove proclaiming the bridegroom ! Oh, there was not a doubt, not a miserable doubt left. He had been trifling with her ; keeping her quiet ; making a tool of her ; his sole object being that miserable half-witted heiress !—no, no, there could be no doubt ! Hannah is in the rumble with some jeering valet, and both look up, and both laugh ; yes, she sees them both laugh, as, fixed like a statue of Despair, her hair streaming in the damp morning air, her form rigid, her lips and cheeks marble-white, and her hands tightly pressed upon her tortured bosom, she stands at the entrance of that bower, still looking wildly after the carriage and four, round which rise such clouds of *dust*—emblems as Bernard thinks, and whispers to the enraptured Dora, of what he would compel her brother to *come down with*.

Slowly Penelope turns with shivering horror, and prepares to leave the spot ; as she does so, she utters a faint cry for the

first objects that meet her eye, are Mr. Addington and his mother!

She sees in a moment that they know all.

He is ghastly pale, but stern and haughty and in his just indignation, he looks almost dignified. In his hand he holds—Oh, God! yes, it is her own note!

He held it out to her, she tried to take it, but a sharp cry burst from her lips; her eyes flashed wildly; all her features worked; her limbs became convulsed; she attempted to speak, but could not articulate; presently her knees shook, her arms dropped, and she fell heavily on the ground.

Mr. and Mrs. Addington looked at each other, they knew not what to do.

“Do not touch her! Do not condescend to touch her, reptile, that she is,” said Mrs. Addington, “I will go and send some of the servants to carry her, not to our house but to, the—”

“No, no, mother, in this state—cruel, treacherous and base as she has been—I

cannot leave her ! and remember we have had no explanation of her wishing to meet him. You wronged her cruelly once, dear mother. How can we tell what account she may be able to give of this mystery ?”

“ Ah, my poor, poor George, it was conscience that smote her to the ground, when she saw you. She was there to meet him. She saw him as we did, wretch, fortune hunter, beggar that he is, elope with your poor, deceived, unhappy sister. She was about to return, broken-hearted, no doubt, but ready to bestow that broken heart on you, when the sight of her own vile note in your hand overcame even her treachery ; her imprudence and her own conscience struck her down at your feet. This is the true state of the case, my poor, poor boy ! and you have only to thank Heaven for an escape which to me seems like a miracle vouchsafed to save you.”

Poor George Addington had nothing to say, all this seemed so very likely and so

true—but in the anguish and disappointment of his heart, he did *not* seem very grateful for his miraculous preservation, and the tears would fill his eyes as he looked on the prostrate form of the beautiful Penelope—and he would raise her in spite of his mother's scorn, and would assist her himself, for she revived a little, so as to walk with his aid, (though she seemed still unconscious) till he had placed her on her bed. Here a succession of convulsive fits came on ; Mr. B—was sent for—

He pronounced her in a state of violent frenzy ; for some days, her life was despaired of—Mr. Addington watched her and tended her, as though she had deserved his love. At length, the crisis came—it passed favourably as far as life was concerned—but oh, how far worse than death, was the result for the wretched girl—life was spared, but Penelope Ashton was pronounced insane—not a violent maniac

exactly—but a wild, wailing, moping, miserable, most miserable wretch!—

Mrs. Ashton had been sent for, to attend her wretched daughter; ignorant as yet of what had caused her dreadful frenzy.—but Blanche was in so alarming a state, her mother would not leave her, and thinking that Penelope at any rate, *was* nursed by her intended and his mother—she felt she ought not to leave poor Blanche, who had none but her to watch her.

Geraldine and Mr. Mercy were certainly most constant and devoted in their visits; but they could not stay with the poor sufferer, and so the wretched mother, after days and nights of unspeakable anguish and suspense, heard that her daughter's life had been saved at the hideous sacrifice of her reason.

And now what was to be done?

Oh ye men of unmeaning attentions! This picture is not overdrawn. Ye have done much by the wild love, ye have

awakened only to scorn it, and the hopes ye have excited only to disappoint—ye have done much towards bringing the patient, the gentle, and the forgiving to a death like Blanche's, and towards driving the proud, the passionate, and the vindictive to a madness like Penelope's.

Mr. Addington had a long and painful interview with the miserable mother. In this she was doomed to hear the whole dreadful story of his wrongs, and her daughter's treachery. He uttered no reproach, he merely told her as calmly as he could the harrowing tale. His tears fell with those of that ill-judging but most miserable mother; and as Blanche's imminent danger required her constant presence, and the wretched Penelope's state was such that the doctors insisted on her removal to an asylum, he undertook the melancholy office of superintending her removal to one. He himself selected a house where every comfort—nay, luxury, which

her miserable state admitted of, would be lavished upon her, and united with the best medical attendance, and the kindest and most soothing system.

For the great expenses of her residence here, the generous man, the injured, but forgiving lover, the true, true Christian made himself responsible; and it was indeed most touching to see him, after the deep and deadly wrong she had done him, after all her treachery, and all her ingratitude. entering into every little detail which he thought might conduce to her comfort—conciliating by his generous presents all who were to attend upon her, and delicately forbearing even to glance at her in her abject, fallen state—knowing how dreadful to the Penelope he had loved so fondly, it would be to be gazed upon—now, shrunken, debased, hideous—as the human creature is when intellect has given place to imbecility.

The constant care and anxiety caused by

the wretched girl he had so idolised, had prevented his taking any step about the elopement of his silly sister with Bernard Brydges. He was fully resolved never to admit that miserable fortune-hunter for one moment into his presence, and there were times when the natural man would triumph in his breast over the Christian, and his colour would rise, and he would set his teeth and grasp his horse-whip, and think with satisfaction of pistols and death—and then better thoughts would come, and he would remember that we are to forgive, if we would be forgiven, and that the wretch is his sister's husband, and that the Lord has said : " Vengeance is mine !"

Some time after her marriage, probably when funds were getting low, and bills high, Dora wrote an affected, heartless letter to her brother, telling him she knew it was very naughty to run away ; but that she would have asked his consent, and her mamma's too, only she was quite sure they

would have said ‘no!’ and as she did not wish to disobey them, she thought it better not to ask them at all. She said she was very happy, and that her Bernard was the best of husbands. She longed to introduce him in his new character to her dear mamma, and her darling brother; and hoped he, as her kind guardian would make every arrangement for transferring, as soon as possible, her fortune into her own, or rather her husband’s hands.

“I shall be proud,” she added, “as I ran away, and have no settlement, to owe everything to my dear ducky; for I am no interested woman of business, but a fond little wife only valuing money for his sake.”

To this silly but cunning letter, the folly of which was Dora’s, and the drift Bernard’s, Mr. Addington’s cool reply was as a thunderbolt.

We have remarked that Bernard Brydges, like so many other very cunning

people, was very careless too. He knew that Dora had seventy thousand pounds; but it never occurred to him to examine the will, to make any enquiry, or to ascertain whether any conditions were annexed to her possession of her fortune.

Now it so happened that, by a codicil, her father had made her brother her guardian; and though in every case she was entitled to a seventy thousand pounds; yet, if she married without his entire consent and sanction, he was at liberty to allow her only what he thought proper; and in case of children he was to reserve for them whatever he did not feel disposed to pay to her. This dreadful codicil was quite new to Bernard; it was not so to Dora, though she was cunning enough to pretend that it was.

Instead of making her the penniless tool of an unprincipled fortune-hunter, it made him entirely dependent on her, or rather on her brother.

That brother, in a few haughty lines, observed that, as the marriage had been contracted without his knowledge, and was one he would never have consented to, he should allow his sister two hundred pounds a month, to be paid to her as long as they lived together happily—but to be paid to her *alone*, if a separation should at any time take place between them.

Here was a blow indeed ! The trapper trapped.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRAPPER TRAPPED.

BERNARD BRYDGES was lying on the sofa, in an elegant brocaded wrapper, and with an Apollo-cap perched lightly on his curled, scented, and glossy hair ; an elegant breakfast was spread before him, and newspapers and periodicals were thrown around. He was amusing himself with the accounts of the movements of that *beau-monde*, in which he planned making so fine a figure

directly the entire possession of his wife's fortune enabled him to do so.

Dora had not yet made her appearance ; but did so in a little jaunty *bonnet à la jolie femme*, and delicate bridal *demie toilette*, just as the footman brought in the letters.

Bernard Brydges had already begun to treat Dora rather *de haut en bas*, and he only nodded as she entered, but did not rise to welcome her, or place her chair ! He began already to look upon her, as dependent on him, for the very luxuries which her own fortune secured to him."

Dora who really doted on him, and had never been made of any great importance at home, was quite content to render him all the *petits soins* most brides expect, and exact ; she went up to him, kissed his white forehead, twirled his glossy curls, handed him his chocolate, buttered his toast, set his egg ready for him, carved his ham and

chicken, and then handed him a letter, saying—

“Oh, Berney, dear! here is George’s answer, now are you not very curious to see what he says?”

“Not very, seeing he can make but one answer, and the words in which he makes it, are not very material to me.”

A quiet smile played round Dora’s mouth.

“Well, she said, “do read his letter, Berney.”

“To gratify your curiosity, my love—not my own—for I confess I have none.”

Dora smiled again.

“Just let me furnish the account of Lady Hauteville’s ball, and then you shall hear the precious document, my dear.”

How insolent was all this, even Dora felt a little piqued, but she did not dare to say so.

At last Bernard Brydges languidly opened the letter, but he instantly changed his

tone and manner as sitting bolt upright, he exclaimed—

“Confound it,” what can the fellow mean, he must be mad, surely!

He then in a voice, husky with passion, read aloud to his wife the letter, the substance of which is already known to the reader.

“This must be some hoax,” he said, “There could not be such a condition as that to your father’s will, and you not know anything at all about it.”

Dora smiled again.

“It cannot be true, surely,” said Bernard, “that your fortune, after all, depends, in any way, on your brother’s will and pleasure, by Jove if that turns out to be the case, I can only say—”

“What,” asked Dora, timidly, and as if frightened.

“Why, I can only say that there never was a man more completely taken in—in short—”

“But Bernard you did not marry me for my fortune, suggested Dora.

“Why, having so little of my own—”

“Yes, of course, had I not had money, we could not have married,” said Dora, but still—”

“Still what,” said Bernard, impatiently, but far more respectfully than before.

“Still two hundred pounds a month is not to be despised, Berney dearest, and what does it matter about its being paid into my hands—since my pride and pleasure will be, to let you have whatever you may desire or require, and to see you, through my means, surrounded with all the elegancies and comforts of life.”

Bernard Brydges opened his fine eyes to their fullest extent—he was amazed—power was conferring dignity on the little being he had so despised. She actually drew herself up and looked quite sensible.

Sensible she was, too, that by her

brother's providential wisdom, everything was in her own hands.

"Then, too," she said, blushing and smiling, "in case——"

"In case of what, my dear?"

"Oh, I can't say more than that; but in case our expenses should increase—of course, George, will increase our means."

"The deuce he will," murmured Bernard Brydges, who was ready to cry, so completely did he feel himself outwitted, and taken in—and, indeed, he began to suspect, that Dora herself, imbecile as he had always thought her, had yet proved more than a match for him; however, he felt he should only add to the "*ridicule*" of his position by showing any temper, or betraying, in any degree, the intense irritation, vexation, and disappointment, of his spirit.

Dora appeared to take it quite as a matter of course, and began to calculate

with more cleverness than Bernard would have given her credit for, the degree of style in which they might live on two thousand four hundred per annum, and while she made a liberal allowance for everything connected with her husband's expenditure, she did not, it was evident, intend, in any way, to stint herself.

She proposed that they should appropriate five hundred a-year each to their own individual expenses, and keep up their joint establishment in as good style as fourteen hundred a-year would allow.

"Your horses, your valet, your toilet, and travelling expenses will come out of your five hundred, dearest," she said. "My maid, my riding horse, my dress, and all my little *ménus plaisirs* will be supplied by mine—and this will so lighten the expenses of the *ménage*, that, I think, as it will thus be reduced to the mere house-rent, servants, and close carriage, we shall do very well, indeed—particularly,

as we must not forget that, in case—of—
an addition to our family, and an increase
of our establishment, George will be
bound to add largely to our means.”

“I am not at all clear yet,” said
Bernard, concealing, under a forced com-
posure, the intense irritation and disap-
pointment of his spirit. “I am not at all
clear that your brother has a right to act
in the arbitrary manner with which he
is threatening me—I shall take Counsel’s
opinion upon it, my love.”

“Ah, I feel quite certain that George
would not threaten what he could not
enforce.”

“Threaten! you don’t imagine he pre-
sumes to threaten.”

“Why, it scarcely amounts to a threat,
Berny—or, at least, most men would be
very glad to be threatened with a monthly
payment of two hundred pounds.”

“No, my love, to have two hundred
pounds a month, ‘conditionally,’ doled out

to one's wife, when one is entitled to seventy thousand, as her portion, down, is what most men would not readily submit to. Not but what, at 3 per cent., the income of the whole capital being two thousand four hundred per annum—we ought not, perhaps, to spend more—but if I had it in my hands, I should contrive to get, at least, 5 per cent., perhaps more, and thus vastly increase our resources—two hundred pounds a month will not go very far.”

“Well, I think most men would jump at it,” said Dora, provokingly; “and I strongly advise you, not to exasperate George—by going to law, or anything of that kind, or he may make it much less—one hundred a month, or, perhaps, fifty!” and she laughed.

“Ah, he had better not do that,” said Bernard Brydges. “There are ways of bringing people to their senses.”

And he clutched his delicate, little

riding-whip, which lay on a table beside him."

"Oh, George is not to be frightened out of anything he chooses to do," said Dora. "I assure you, there isn't a better boxer or wrestler anywhere—when he was at school, he was quite remarkable for his strength and skill in all manly sports—why, he'd make nothing of you, Berny! You wouldn't have a chance with him."

"But a brace of pistols would put us very much on an equality, even supposing you are right, which, I must own, I doubt!"

"Oh, but George would never do anything so wicked—nor would you—you are only joking I know—how could you, my husband, take a deliberate aim at my brother—and that because you wanted rather more money than he chose to allow us."

Bernard ground his teeth. Dora's com-

mon sense startled him ; but the fact was, Dora was not the fool she had appeared for so many years and while under the influence of a romantic delusion, about her first lover, and the excitement of her absurd passion for Bernard—that passion had been moderated a little by a closer acquaintance with its sublime object—if no man is a hero to his valet, perhaps, few are so to their wives ; and though Dora was still ridiculously fond of Bernard, her adoration of him had, in a great measure, subsided.

If matrimony is not a certain cure for love, as some assert, it undoubtedly is for idolatry.

Bernard was very much amazed, and not a little annoyed at this change—but on reflection, he resolved to make the best of it.

“ After all,” thought he, “ two hundred pounds a month is not to be despised ; and Dora’s turning out less of a fool than

I had imagined her to be, may have its advantages after all."

So he went up to her in a more lover-like fashion than he had adopted of late, and said—

"If I had not married, in a great measure, from affection, my Dora, this would, of course, make a great breach between us—but as your brother can only diminish our resources—and not in any way affect our love, I am content, and you may write and tell him so."

Dora threw herself into his arms in an ecstasy of joy ; and though for several mornings past he had left her to her own devices for amusement, he now very kindly and respectfully asked her what were her plans for the day—proposing a ride to fill up the hours, till dinner time, and then as a London star was announced at the theatre, offering to engage a private box and escort her.

Dora was in the seventh heaven, never

in the best days of his courtship had he been half so tender, half so respectful.

It was a lesson to her.

“Money is indeed power,” she said to herself, “and it is a power I will take care not to resign. He shall want for nothing; but still he shall owe everything to me; and while that is the case, I shall have, I see, no reason to repent of my love-match. For what could I have done better, had I been ever so wise, than to have secured an affectionate, loveable, handsome husband, ready to oblige me in everything, and who would not for the world give me any offence. Why should I enquire why he would not offend me? Some are afraid of their wives’ tongues! Some who marry beauties, are afraid of their flirting with others or being cool and indifferent to them. Temper, Beauty, Money, what does it matter what the secret of a wife’s influence is, as long as she possesses it; and I will not readily forfeit mine. He shall see that *my*

liberality is regulated in a great measure by *his* behaviour, and I dare say that will ensure me an excellent husband. It shall be my care to be a good wife. He does not know that I have invited the Comte and Comtesse De la Pirouette, to spend some days here. I wonder how he will like that, I see now they have served his turn, and secured him my fortune ; he is ready to cut them ; but I have a regard for them, and I will not allow my friends to be slighted."

So saying, Dora equipped for her ride, went in search of her husband.

" Berny, dear,"

" My Dora, what is it ? "

" I forgot to tell you that I expect the Comte and Comtesse De la Pirouette to spend a few days with us."

" You are joking my love."

" No, indeed—don't you remember we promised them once, that if ever we were married, they should stay with us before the honey-moon was over."

“Yes, but I never intended it.”

“Oh, but I did, and I always keep a promise, and thought you did too. I had no idea you would break your word with them ; and so yesterday I wrote to ask them to come !”

“And why did you not consult me first ?”

“You forget you were away all day—”

Bernard bit his lips—

“They are such absurdities ! such caricatures !”

“Oh never mind that, we know no one here—and will only go out with them in a close carriage—

“Well,” said Bernard, “if you have asked them, it cannot be helped, and I must make the best of it ; but another time, I beg you will not take such a step without consulting me.”

“I shall always consult you, when you are by my side—but when you leave me to myself, Berny dear, I must act for myself, and if that is not exactly as you would

wish—why the fault is that of the gad-about husband, not the stay-at-home wife.”

“The idea,” thought Bernard, “of the little simpleton and half-witted mope, turning out to have so much shrewdness, sense, and independence of spirit—she’s completely outwitted me. However, it doesn’t much matter after all ; we shall have plenty of money, and I declare, I think I like her better than when I looked upon her as such a mere noodle—but to think of her inviting those odious Pirouettes!—and making it a sort of point of honor too, I must sham an illness, or contrive something to avoid going out with them!”

“The horses are at the door, and my mistress begs you wont keep her waiting, sir, as she wants to be home in time to receive the Comte and Comtess de la Pirouette,” said Hannah, rather saucily—

“Tell your mistress, I will be with her directly!” was the polite and respectful reply—

“ I see missus is taking my advice,” said Hannah, to herself—“ if she will but persevere, she’ll have the upper hand of him, as I have of her, and after all, this life is Paradise, compared to what it was at Addington House—so I don’t repent of having managed that match after all. I only wish I could get myself settled as easily—but then my face is my fortune, and I know that is rather the worse for wear, which Miss Dora’s guineas are not. Oh what a fine thing it is to have a fine fortune, just to see that handsome young fellow, that Miss Ashton was dying for—to see him running off with our Miss Dora ; and now, because he finds out that her money is in her own hands—though before, he had begun to slight her—following her about like a household dog—oh man ! oh money !—Instead of being the root of all evil—to poor women, it’s the root of all good—just see what our Miss Dora is now, and what she was before she’d brought her

money and my wit into play, as it were—
Why if she choses, or rather if I chose,
she'll be the Queen of the gay world here,
and while her money lay dormant, she was
nothing but a butt and a mope.

CHAPTER XIX.

LE REVEIL.

ISABEL'S day-dream of bliss is over, at least for a time; and never again, though she may recover composure, and learn resignation, never can unalloyed happiness be hers !

The Past will have power to poison both the Present and the Future—After a dreadful blow, an irremediable loss, our minds are

no longer entirely under our own dominion—our security in our earthly goods is gone! Our peace is subject, at any time, to be invaded by armies of torturing thoughts—and the ghosts of past joys, will steal along and make more ghastly still, the shattered temples of Memory, and the ruins of the fortress of Hope!

Yes, Isabel is awakened from her bridal dream of bliss, by the frightful news, that Blanche is dying, and Penelope, worse than dead!—For surely, far worse than the death of the body, is that of the mind.

Isabel was the fondest of sisters, and the shock and the grief for a time, quite overcame her. Sir Hector was all tenderness, all anxiety, all forbearance; yes! even when anguish of spirit made her, at times, impatient of consolation—and ready to fly from the comfort of his presence, to the desolation of solitary brooding.

Poor Isabel! they had a long journey to perform, and though in cases of mental

anguish, travelling is always recommended, yet there is a great constraint in the confinement of railway carriages, and in the impossibility of weeping freely, in the presence of strangers. Sir Hector's kindness knew no bounds; it was so patient, so enduring, so consolatory—whenever he could secure a private carriage he did so, no matter at what expense, and was rewarded when Isabel, after weeping for hours on his bosom, fell asleep on that dear and safe resting place—

At last the dreadful journey was over.

Their carriage stops at the gate of Ashton lodge—Isabel trembles violently, she dares not raise her eyes; she dares not trust herself to ask; but a shudder passes through Sir Hector's frame, as the house comes in view! Isabel who had been lying back, supported by his arms, feels it as if it were an electric shock! She opens her eyes, gazes wildly at her once happy home, shrieks out, "Oh! Blanche,

oh, my dear, dear Blanche ! am I indeed too late !” and fell back on her husband’s bosom, perfectly insensible. One glance had conveyed the dreadful tidings.

The shutters were closed, Blanche had died during the preceding night.

CHAPTER XX.

DEATH.

Yes Blanche Ashton was dead ! Dead, as far as this world of sorrow, shame and disappointment is concerned, but alive for ever through a happy Eternity ! For if those who fall asleep in faith, awake in their Saviour's bosom, Blanche is there now ! Owing to Mr. Mercy's pious teaching, and Geraldine Templeton's earnest and sisterly

exhortations, Blanche has repented of every sin of omission, and commission, and not only repented—for that were not enough—by the grace of God she has been taught that Repentance without Faith, will avail her nothing, and in *entire* faith in the blood of her Saviour, she has cast her burthen on him, and fallen asleep !

It was a great comfort to Isabel when she was able to *reason*—for at first, of course, she could only *feel*—to find that so blessed a change had been wrought in the once careless heart of her beloved sister ; nor was Blanche's conversion without its effect on all her relations, those who *had* thought on these matters, now thought more earnestly and constantly than before ; those who had not pondered on them at all, now felt for the first time, what death is !

Isabel wept long, and at first bitterly, over her dear Blanche, but it was impossible to sorrow like one without hope, for a death like hers.

Far, far, more bitter ere long her tears for Penelope's fate. Far, far, more painful was it to know the one living, that worse than death, the life of the Insane, than the other stretched in her snowy shroud, her virgin beauty, a holy smile on her lips, a holy calm on her brow, and flowers, emblems of her beauty and her fate, strewn over her.

Isabel could not tear herself from that cold pale form, but oh what torturing memories arose, as sitting on the little bed with its draperies of white and rose colour—

She bent her o'er the dead ;
Ere the first day of death had fled
That first dark day of nothingness,
The last of *danger* and *distress*.

Of *danger* and *distress* ! Oh, at those words, those inspired words, which rise so naturally to the lips of all who look upon

a dear one newly dead,—now gushed forth the large hot tears, for she felt that even to that beloved sister, even to Blanche, at eighteen, those words applied too well !

What days, weeks, months, aye, years of danger and distress has that poor darling known, before her young heart broke ! For Isabel felt that Blanche is indeed dead of what is *called* a broken heart—that is to say, that disappointed love with its ghastly train of miseries and pains—the fever of the mind, the wounded spirit, the restless anguish, the neglected warnings, the sleepless nights, the torturing days, have worked their wonted way ; with the once merry, happy, rosy girl—and that from the age of fifteen, when Blanche first met Trevor Templeton, and loved him with the fervor and constancy of her simple and earnest nature, till her eighteenth summer was completed, she had lived and died a victim—an unconscious one at first, but a victim still—for what girl singled

out for the capricious, heartless pursuit of the man of unmeaning attentions is not a victim—unless like Isabel herself, she sees through him, shallow as he is in his greatest depths, and rejects him with the contempt he so richly deserves.

Ah, how often had Isabel sat in exactly the same place, on that little snowy bed—when Blanche lay warm and glowing, and gaily laughing and chatting with her favorite Isabel, oversome pleasant party they had enjoyed together, and Blanche would confide to the sister she loved and trusted some delightful proof of Trevor's love—some honied words he had spoken—or display some *bon-bon motto* given by him, or some little flower he had worn!

“ Oh memory thou fond deceiver,
Still importunate and vain,
To former joys recurring ever,
And turning all the past to pain.

Thou like the world th' oppressed oppressing,
Thy smiles augment the wretch's wo,
And he who wants each other blessing,
In thee, shall ever find a foe.

How bitterly true do we all find this outburst from a heart evidently experienced in anguish ! And oh how much does busy memory add to the countless woes of the bereaved—'The pleasures of memory !' Ah, they belong only to the intellect !

It is pleasant to remember a fine ruin—a lovely country—a beautiful picture—a gay party—but the *heart must have nothing to do with it*, or it is torture !

If that ruin, that country, that picture, had been seen with, that party enjoyed by, a loved and lost one, every detail becomes a minister of anguish, and while (ingenious self tormenters as we are) we *will* remember, till our hearts faint, our brains reel and our eyes overflow, our very souls within us seem to exclaim 'oh that I could forget !'

And then such memories never come alone! Wild regrets rush in—and where Regret is, Remorse will force her way—imperfect, frail and faulty as the best of us are—we never can seem to ourselves to have been blameless towards those lost ones we have loved, when our own consciences, awakened by Regret, arraign us in the solemn presence of the Dead!

Oh how much more we might have done! Who does not feel this when he can do no more?"

Have we ever been guilty of anger—of impatience—of neglect?"

There might have been provocation!

Oh, we cannot believe it now. Now that cold and still, and silent and unoffending and unresisting and helpless—*for ever* cold, and still, and silent, and unresisting, and unoffending, and helpless! lies the shrouded—the coffined loved one!

We would die, gladly die, to atone. Alas! there is no atoning to the Dead. But there

seems to be a meek reproach on the pale cold lips, and the hand does not return the eager pressure of our own, and for a moment we forget it cannot, and we think it will not ! Oh, wrong it not ! Wrong not thus that once warm generous nature—When did thy hand seek an answering pressure, and find it not ? Those dear, closed eyes—did they ever meet with indifference, a joyous, a fond, an anxious or a sorrowful look of yours ? When did you weep, and they wept not ? When did you smile and they responded not ? Never ! oh, never ! And oh could that beloved one witness the anguish that is rending your bosom—and hear the hissing of the causeless and morbid remorse which is maddening your spirit—*the remorse inseparable from all true love!*—would she lie cold and passive there ? Oh, no ! as in the olden times the arms would open—the tears fall, the words of comfort flow—and her silence and her stillness, while you weep and wail,

proclaim the dreadful fact that she is *dead*—dead, Oh, the stony, dreadful words—dead!

Isabel buried her face in the cold sheet that covered the colder form, and sobs of hysteric anguish rent her exhausted frame.

Sir Hector—who had been for some time awaiting her in the little ante-room of Blanche's chamber—now entered—even he, brave soldier that he was—(from his earliest youth familiar with death in its most violent and hideous shapes, the death of the battle-field and of the military hospitals)—he felt a strange and solemn awe—a shudder and a chill, as his eye wandered from the kneeling, heaving form of his writhing and sobbing Isabel, to the still and shrouded figure of the Dead.

For a few moments he could not speak. He turned to the window, and he buried his face in his handkerchief; but he determined to be firm, for every moment Isabel's

grief grew more ungovernable, and her sobs quicker and more suffocating. He paused to gather strength—his eye fell on Blanche's little toilette table, there was the glass which had so often reflected her face, when radiant with love and hope, she was preparing to meet Trevor. In that mirror she had so often looked, while braiding her fair locks with flowers or with pearls for him !

Sir Hector glanced from the glass to the bed—those bright fair locks are hidden now—all but the braids across the brow, under a little cap. That face that blushed so at its bright reflection, is pale, cold and rigid; and all this is Trevor's work ; and at the thought the hot vindictive blood rushed from the manly heart to the brow—and Sir Hector longed, aye panted, to avenge *her* and to chastise *him* !

The thought was fast becoming a plan, when Blanche's Bible met his view. Mechanically he opened it—a letter fell

out. He picked it up—it was directed to Sir Hector Loftus. He opened it. It ran thus :

“ From Blanche’s death-bed.”

“ MY DEAR BROTHER,”

“ This is the first time I have called you so ; and, alas ! it must be the last ; but you well deserve the name—for the kindness you have shown me ; and the deep, true love you bear my darling sister, make me feel that I have, indeed, a brother in you !

“ I am going to ask you to act as one—and that, not as a worldly brother would act in such a case as mine ; but as a Christian brother must and would act. They tell me I have been wronged, deceived, deserted—It may be so, or I may have deceived myself—but I feel no anger

—and as the Lord has said, ‘ *Vengeance is mine!*’ I implore you, dear, dear brother, to use your powerful influence with my poor mother, with my uncle and my sisters, to let the miserable story of my unhappy attachment die with me ; and I entreat you—you, whom I have, with terror, heard it hinted, will be eager to punish—I implore you, with my dying breath, not to resent, but to forgive.

“ Oh! that I might be spared to ask you this myself, before my fast expiring breath is gone for ever ; but I fear it may not be ; and my dear friend, Geraldine Templeton, is kind enough to write these lines for me, and to promise she will do her best to ensure your compliance. Through Mr. Mercy and through Geraldine I have been taught that forgiveness I shall soon so need. I have been, I trust, prepared for the awful and yet blessed change that awaits me ! and, oh! dear brother, I have been enabled to say, “ It is good for

me that I have been in trouble." And now farewell! I know that my darling Isabel's beloved husband will be a son to my poor dear mother, and a brother to Penelope. I leave you my Bible. Oh! study it, dear ones, now that you are in health, and prosperity, as I, alas! only learnt to do, in the hours of sickness and despair.

"I have marked many parts that have comforted me, and many pages are blistered with my tears.

"And now may God bless you all, dear ones! Farewell till we meet to part no more; and, dear brother, remember—
Forgive if you would be forgiven

"BLANCHE."

As Sir Hector read this touching appeal—the sublime forgiveness of the dying spirit that dictated it, awoke a kindred

feeling in his bosom—resentment towards Trevor was lost in admiration for Blanche.

“His own miserable conscience will punish him, and avenge her,” he thought; “he is too mean a reptile to deserve to die for her; and well has she illustrated one of the Christian’s holiest duties—well shall we do to imitate her gentle spirit, her divine forgiveness. Blanche, angel girl! you shall be obeyed.”

As he spoke these words, Isabel—for the first time aware that she was not alone, so completely had she been absorbed by her anguish looked round; perceiving her husband, she stretched out her hand to him, in a moment he was kneeling by her side.

“My love!” he said, perceiving that Isabel still sobbed convulsively, and again buried her face in poor Blanche’s winding-sheet; “my love! this excessive grief will injure your health.”

“What matter?” said Isabel, almost

bitterly. “ Oh that I, too, could die! and cease to feel this agony, this anguish, this despair !”

“ Isabel,” said Sir Hector, in a tone of mournful reproach; “ what do I hear? have you forgotten you are a wife—a daughter? — Where is your love for me? for your poor, poor mother?”

“ Forgive me, dearest!” said Isabel, “ I knew not what I said. Ah! grief is not a gentle, not an amiable feeling. I knew not there was so much of the savage in my nature—I knew not that I could be so selfish, so irritable. Forgive me.”

And she leant her head on his bosom.

“ Grief, my dearest wife!” said Sir Hector, “ is humanising if we regulate it; it is brutalising if we let it master us ; in yielding to it, we become unmindful of the feelings, the interests, and the welfare of others, as well as of our own. Grief is, of all the tyrants of the human breast, the most exacting, the most encroaching ; it

demands all that is amiable and lovely in our natures, our affections, our duties, our time, our health. It is of a growth so rapid, and soon becomes of a strength so irresistible that we must cope with it in its infancy, or yield to it for ever! Now, or never, my Isabel!—There is no merit in sacrificing the living to the Dead—Holy duties, to a morbid inclination; Principle to Passion. This is what those do, who give way to despair when God chooses to afflict them thus; this lays our hearths and homes desolate, Isabel! This fills our mad-houses; this is rebellion against the Supreme, and it is sure to be punished.”

“But I loved her so dearly!” sobbed Isabel.

“Not better than you love your husband?”

“Oh, no, no! I left her to follow you.”

“And now you would leave me to follow her; and for ever, too.”

“Oh no, no! I spoke rashly, I did, I did not mean it—but it seems to me as if I never knew how dear she was to me, till now that she is gone for ever—then, too, Remorse (a new and dreadful inmate in my bosom, dearest), whispers that had I not been engrossed by self, had I been as mindful of poor Blanche’s interests, and as careful of her happiness, as I was of my own, I might have saved her too, and she would not now be lying there the victim of the most base and heartless of men, and his cruel, his unmeaning attentions! Oh, it is my fault—she always listened to me—I might have warned—I might have saved!” Here Isabel’s sobs choked her words, and again she flung herself on her knees and buried her face in the sheet.

“Isabel,” said Sir Hector, “all this may be natural, but it is vain, most vain, and I warn you, my love, that it is your duty to struggle against the insidious advances of this morbid remorse, for I do believe

they are devices of the great enemy of our souls, to prevent our bowing to the will of God, and saying 'it is well.' What could your feeble efforts have availed towards detaining one whom God chose to summon away—Blanche's time was come—or she would still be here! And oh so young! so good! so well prepared to die! who that loves her would wish her back in this world of bitter disappointment? Here, when at the first real trial, we find the love we most trusted in—was a dream!"

"What mean you, dearest?" sobbed Isabel, startled by the mournful reproach of his tone.

"I mean, that had Isabel loved me as I love her, and as she seemed to love me, her heart would not be all desolate while I am spared, nor could despair overwhelm a wife for whom life promises so much to hope and to enjoy."

Isabel rose, dried her eyes, pressed her lips for the last time to Blanche's cold

brow, covered the fair young form with the sheet, and turning to Sir Hector, said—

“Forgive me, dearest ! Remember this is my first real trial, my first acquaintance with Death, and perhaps if my heart were incapable of this deep grief, at the loss of so dear a sister, it would be so too of this deeper love for the best of husbands. Love and sorrow spring from the same source dearest—Sorrow for a short season has prevailed over Love now—Sorrow shall yield to Love, at least as far as my will and my duty can subdue an agony so terrible and so new ! I will not shed one tear that I can repress, and if at times you see me sad, you must bear with me, and remember that if I loved you less, I should mourn a great deal more.”

“Dearest !” said Sir Hector, fondly embracing her, “I do not ask, I do not expect impossibilities—with such a heart as

yours, a heart whose warm, deep feelings I glory in, more than in your brilliant intellect and heavenly beauty—I know you must mourn a sister so beloved—I expect that for a time grief will be an inmate of your bosom, I only ask you to moderate that grief—not to let it sour your sweet temper, and unhinge your noble mind—I only beg you to endeavour to control it as we must do every passion, which if not mastered, will master us; such a grief dearest, so moderated will leave you still some love for your husband, and your poor Mother, doubly bereaved she is—Ah, let her not be trebly so!”

“How is she doubly bereaved dearest?”

Sir Hector paused for a moment, Isabel as yet knew none of the details of the fate—far, far, more dreadful than the most dreadful death, which Penelope, by her own perfidy, had brought upon herself. Thinking however that a divided anguish was less dan-

gerous in its effects than a concentrated one, he told her the harrowing, the disgraceful tale.

Isabel listened with distended eyes, lips apart, a shuddering chill, and a sickening sense of disgrace and horror! At the close of this dreadful tale of Sin, of Shame and of Despair she said, stooping to kiss once more Blanche's cold brow.

"Ah, what a blissful fate does thine now appear, sweet victim! How heavenly thy calm and sinless repose compared to the fitful tortures Penelope has entailed upon herself. Her conscience her tormenter! 'Herself her proper hell.' Sleep on sweet Blanche! Oh that I had seen Penelope cold and still as thou—the sinned against, the pitied—rather than know that she lives the dreadful life of the insane—a bye-word for treachery and ingratitude! My poor, poor, mother, so proud of Penelope and of her brilliant prospects! Oh what anguish, what bitter disappointment for her! Take

me to her, dearest! Thank you, for awakening me from this trance of selfish despair. I must rouse myself indeed, for I must supply to her the place of the two she has lost."

"And it shall be my study and delight to help you, dearest, in that pious office. I have seen your poor mother—she is very ill, and very, very wretched. Let us go to her, Isabel, I have something to read to both of you—a letter written to me from poor Blanche's death bed, earnestly entreating that her wrongs may die with her, and that all who love her will study not to *resent* but to *forgive*. I trust that your mother, in whose heart her poor child's death seems to have awakened a passionate wish for revenge—will yield to the christian spirit that prompted Blanche's dying prayer, and that she will emulate the sublime forgiveness of her child."

Sir Hector and Isabel hastened to Mrs. Ashton's room, to their surprise they did

not find her in bed, and weeping in the deepest dejection as Sir Hector had left her, she was up, in her wrapper, and walking up and down her room in a state of great excitement, reading alternately a letter and a newspaper, with a sort of wild hysterical delight.

“Look here,” she said, “read this, read this, Isabel! read this, Sir Hector, and join me, Isabel in blessing your dear, brave, noble uncle. Blanche is avenged! read! read! read!”

Sir Hector read, while Isabel, pale and trembling, listened, and Mrs. Ashton’s eyes flashed fire, and her cheek flushed.

“Read the letter first,” she cried.

“Carlton Club, St. James’s.”

“MY DEAR SISTER-IN-LAW,

“Directly I received your message, announcing the dreadful event, I

armed myself with a horsewhip, and seeing the scoundrel from my club window, on the steps of the ——— Club, opposite, surrounded by his friends, I went up to him, and struck him smartly across his brazen face with my whip; he was so astounded that I was able to repeat the blow twice before he understood the state of affairs; when he did, so great was his rage, that I believe he would have killed me on the spot, but for his friends, who held him back and said something not very complimentary to me about age, and suggested *satisfaction*.

“ At the word, I handed my card to the least ruffianly of the set. In the course of the night, a meeting was arranged—and at dawn this morning I had the *satisfaction* of avenging my brother's child, and spoiling the scoundrel's heartless sport for the future, since my bullet entered his left cheek, and has so shattered and disfigured his shameless face—that no woman

will henceforth be able to look upon him without horror. I am happy to add, that his miscreant life is in no danger ; and he will, I hope, for many a long year, be a living warning to all men of unmeaning attentions ; and, forgive me, I must add the words—to the mothers and daughters who encourage them !

“ There is but one opinion among all men of honor—namely, that he has richly deserved the chastisement I have inflicted. What news from my dear Penelope ? Of course, poor Blanche’s death must postpone her nuptials ; but, as delays are dangerous, I hope only the shortest time that *etiquette* permits, will elapse before the Bride Elect is the happy wife of one of the best and most honorable of men. Are Isabel and Sir Hector arrived ?

“ Your affectionate brother-in-law,

“ PERCY ASHTON.”

The paragraph in the paper merely said—

AFFAIR OF HONOR.

“ A hostile meeting took place at dawn, this morning, on Hampstead Heath, between P——y A——n, Esq., an elderly gentleman, member of the C—— Club, and well known among the *habitués* of St. James's, and T——r T——n, Esq., an undergraduate of Christ's College, Oxford.

“ It appears that the beautiful and amiable Miss B——e A——n, niece of P——y A——n, Esq., had been jilted by the gay Lothario from the banks of the Isis—and, we grieve to add, had died of a broken heart. Having neither father nor brother, her uncle took upon himself to avenge her death—and, in spite of his years, he, last evening, struck T——r T——n, Esq., severely across the face with

his horsewhip—and gave him the satisfaction this morning of shattering, with a pistol shot, the face which will do no more mischief among the fair ; at least, not in the way it has done.

“ Much as we reprobate the almost obsolete and savage practice of duelling—we must say, that if ever it could be justified—it is in such a case as the present.

“ The deepest sympathy is felt throughout all classes for the excellent and lovely victim and her bereaved relatives—while all unite in honoring her brave and veteran champion, and in despising and execrating the unprincipled and heartless man, who has caused the early death of one so good, so lovely, and so true !”

“ I had something very different to read to you, dear Mrs. Ashton,” said Sir Hector, producing Blanche’s letter. “ It is from Blanche on her death-bed !”

“ Oh, I can anticipate its contents,” said Mrs. Ashton, wildly. “ She was all

forgiveness—read it—I can bear to hear it now—now that I know she is avenged, I can forgive.”

Sir Hector read—but Mrs. Ashton seemed little moved—all her thoughts were engrossed by the signal punishment of the wretched Trevor Templeton. So great indeed did her excitement become, that Isabel and Sir Hector began to suspect what was really the case—the dreadful trials she had undergone, particularly in the fate of the object of her pride, her ambition, and her love, the miserable Penelope, had been too much for a brain never of the strongest !

The best medical aid was called in ; but, for six weeks, a brain fever of the most violent and alarming nature, kept Sir Hector and Isabel in constant anxiety and alarm. In her anxious watch, her terrible suspense, and her constant dread of losing her mother, (a mother ever so tender and devoted, and, in spite of her

weaknesses, so inexpressibly dear!) Blanche and Penelope, though never forgotten, were often in some degree superseded! and so great were the comfort and the help, Isabel derived, in this her greatest trial, from the tender and judicious aid of her husband—so truly filial were his attentions to the poor sufferer, that Isabel's love and gratitude increased tenfold, and she felt, (as her heart suggested that her mother's recovery was mainly owing to Sir Hector's care,) that while he was spared, she could not be all desolate, nor did Sir Hector confine his care merely to the saving of his mother-in-law's life—as soon as her state admitted of conversation, he with a tenderness and tact, beautiful in all, but 'beautiful exceedingly' in one so manly and so brave—led her thoughts gently and perseveringly to the contemplation of the one thing needful. Blanche's Bible was of the greatest use in effecting the important change he so wished and

labored to produce. His earnest efforts were crowned with a success surpassing his fondest hopes; and Mrs. Ashton rose from her bed, wasted and wan, it is true, subdued and sorrowful—but not with the angry grief she had known—not sorrowing as those without hope—owning she had deserved the punishment God had inflicted—patient even when she thought of her once idolised, her gifted Penelope—a wretched lunatic, and, from her heart, forgiving the miserable destroyer of her innocent Blanche.”

As Isabel noted this blessed change, and saw the once desolate mourner seeking comfort where alone it can be found, and read in the still tearful but quiet eyes, and on the pale, but tranquil cheek, that peace and resignation were within, she blessed, from the depths of her devoted heart, the genuine and unostentatious spirit of Christianity, by the irresistible influence of which both her beloved mother

and herself had been brought to the foot of the Cross.

And the young wife gloried in her husband, and woman always loves with devotion and enthusiasm a man she can glory in.

It was not till Mrs. Ashton was restored to health of mind and body, that Sir Hector could bear to leave her, or to separate the mother and daughter. His powerful influence availed to procure him the necessary delay ; but at last the interval was expired, the dreaded day approached, and Isabel must follow her husband's fortunes, and leave that beloved mother ; but that mother was no longer lonely, no longer desolate.

One painful duty remains to Isabel before her departure, she cannot go without seeing poor Penelope ; and yet how terrible will the interview be !

Penelope has been removed from the private lunatic asylum, which Mr. Adding-

ton had at first selected for her, to one nearer to the abode of her friends. Sir Hector had visited her several times, and he would fain have spared Isabel the pain of a sight which he had found a most depressing one, even to himself ; but Isabel's sense of duty urged her to go, and duty never appealed in vain to Sir Hector.

Mrs. Ashton's nerves were not yet considered strong enough for this terrible ordeal ; and Isabel, pale, trembling, and aghast, in spite of her efforts to be calm, set out with her husband for B—— House, B——, where, under the management of the celebrated Dr. ——, thirty of the Outlaws of Reason dragged on their dreadful and mysterious existence—dreadful and mysterious still, though all that skill and mercy could do to mitigate its sufferings was done.

Isabel felt sick at heart, and very, very faint, as they passed through the massive gates so well secured ; and, after driving

through the avenue, approached the large and handsome house, with its iron-barred windows, and which, large and handsome as it was, had still a something about it, which proclaimed it the home of Despair.

How her heart sank as she entered the cheerless waiting-room, and how it first throbbed with terror, and then sickened with disappointment, when the door opened, and rising as she thought to meet her sister, Sir Hector introduced her to Dr. ——.

Isabel was far too agitated to speak ; her tears rose, and a choking sob stopped her utterance. Dr. ——, perceiving this, was too merciful to detain her with any common-place remarks on the weather ; but merely saying to Sir Hector :

“ There is no change of any importance ; but Miss Ashton has been unusually excited to-day, owing to my having, (as she so loves flowers,) offered her a bouquet of Cape jasmin and scarlet geranium. I presume my well-meant offering awoke some

torturing recollections ; for her mood suddenly changed from the deepest dejection to the wildest excitement. I fear it has not as yet abated sufficiently to admit of her release from necessary restraint, and I mention it to prepare you for the state in which you will find her, and to account for it."

Isabel well understood the disastrous effect that the flowers, Dr. — mentioned must have on had her sister's morbid brain—the first bouquet Bernard Brydges had offered her was composed of Cape jasmin and scarlet geranium. Penelope had, with the greatest patience, skill, and care, reared plants from the slips of which the bouquet was composed. She had loved, watched, and tended these plants, as a fond mother does a darling child ; they rewarded her care, and grew and flourished in luxuriant beauty, and their blossoms were her favourite ornaments in her bosom and her hair. Ah ! associated as they were with passionate love, pride, hope, and joy, no

wonder they were maddening now to the disgraced, forsaken, miserable, and imbecile inmate of a lunatic asylum ; for at times the wretched girl had a dreadful consciousness of what had passed. A gleam of reason cruelly came at intervals to convince her of the reality of Bernard's falsehood, and her own treachery, and to enable her to understand the abject horrors of her fate. Such lucid intervals, which generally succeeded fits of the deepest dejection, always brought on attacks of violent mania, and in this state no inmate of the asylum was more dangerous, or required more resolute and coercive measures.

Sir Hector, and Dr. —, would have advised Isabel not to see her sister in this her most dreadful state, but that her immediate departure left her no option but that of visiting her now, or leaving England without seeing her at all.

“ You must prepare yourself for finding

your sister much altered!" said the Doctor, as he led the way upstairs, and through long corridors, with rooms on each side, the doors of which had iron-bars, and through which doors came the low moan! the wild shriek, or the dreadful laugh! "And now I will leave you; for I am wanted elsewhere, and you, of course, would prefer being alone. But, my dear young lady, nerve yourself; and be prepared for a frightful change."

Alas! no preparation could have diminished the shock Isabel experienced on beholding the late brilliant and beautiful Penelope. Her luxuriant, jet black hair had been removed; her head shaved, and the crown covered with a perpetual blister; her face was lean and sallow, and there were deep dark hollows under the large, fierce eyes, which rolled restlessly about! Her emaciated figure was clothed in a flannel gown, and a straight-waistcoat. In this hideous attire she was parading up and

down the room, and talking in a rapid but incoherent manner.

She showed no sign whatever of recognition, when Sir Hector and Isabel entered ; but she bowed and approached them, and said, with a ghastly attempt at a smile :

“ So the guests are come at last ! Is the wedding-feast ready ?—Where is the bridegroom ?—I have been awaiting him long.—How do you like my bridal-dress ?—I am the Bride-Elect, you know.”

“ My poor, poor Penelope ! my dear, dear sister !” sobbed Isabel.

“ Ha !” shrieked the wretched maniac, suddenly changing her tone and her mood. “ ha ! why do you cry ? You know that he was false—You know he deceived, forsook, betrayed me—You know—Hist ! there are his chariot wheels—Here ! here ! come here !” and she rushed to the window. “ Look ! look ! look ! there they go, and she, the little hideous, half-witted one, she is his bride ; but hist !

she has wealth, and I—I had only my deep, deep love. But she shall not wed him—I will follow him through the world, and proclaim his treachery—Come! come! come!”

And, with a wild laugh, she would have dashed herself against the barred window; but the female attendants, who had remained in the ante-room closely watching her, rushed in, carried her forcibly away, placed her in a chair, and held her there; and Sir Hector, seeing Isabel apparently about to sink with the painful excitement of this dreadful scene, said :

“Come, my love! you can do no good here, and you injure yourself without benefitting her.”

“Oh! let me give her one kiss!” said Isabel.

“Indeed, miss, it would not be safe,” said one of the women. “Look at her eye—she is meditating some mischief.”

“Leave me! unhand me! How dare

you touch me ?” shrieked Penelope, struggling with these two powerful women. “ Do you know who I am ?—Hist !—though *he* has betrayed, forsaken me,” and she said, in a hissing whisper : “ There is one who loves me yet ; and I shall be mistress of Oak Park, and have a splendid equipage, and shine at Court in plumes and jewels—Release me, and come with me. Do dear, sweet, kind friends ! and I will reward you richly—I shall be Mrs. Addington, and have wealth at will—Come with me to the bridal feast. I am the Bride-Elect.”

As the vulgar women only laughed at these boasts and promises, the unhappy maniac grew again frightfully excited ; she foamed at the mouth, she shrieked, and struggled ; and Sir Hector, as Isabel sank fainting in his arms, bore her down stairs, and after the usual restoratives had been successfully administered, he thanked Doctor —— for the kindness and care

evidently bestowed on the miserable girl, and returned with the pale and weeping Isabel to Ashton Lodge.

Some days elapsed before Isabel was sufficiently recovered to travel. Sir Hector dreading for his poor and still delicate mother-in-law a trial which had proved too much even for the young and healthy Isabel; but convinced that as soon as he was gone her maternal tenderness and anxiety would take her to the lunatic asylum at B——, induced her to accompany Isabel and himself to Portsmouth, whence they were to embark.

Hearing, when there, that some very kind and dear old friends of his, and of Mrs. Ashton's, were staying in the Isle of Wight, he made her promise to spend a month there before returning to Town. He enabled Isabel to provide handsomely for her expenses. He had already made himself responsible to Doctor —— for the annual payment of £200 per annum for his

unfortunate sister-in-law, and shrewdly suspecting what proved to be the case, that Mrs. Ashton was seriously involved, he persuaded her to put her complicated affairs into the hands of his solicitor, and united with Mr. Percy Ashton to purchase her an annuity sufficient to ensure her every comfort.

Had not duty imperatively called him away, he would not have listened to any suggestions of interest and ambition ; but would have remained in England, that Mrs. Ashton might live with them, and in the soothing society of Isabel and himself find some consolation for her double and dreadful loss. But it might not be, duty compelled Sir Hector to go, and duty and love compelled Isabel to accompany him.

It was a bitter parting ; but Mrs. Ashton knew now where to seek for comfort, and Sir Hector promised to return as soon as he could do so with honour, and Isabel would write by every mail ; and, as the tall ship

that bore them away was lost to the straining, tearful eyes of the Christian mother, she meekly said within herself:
“ *Thy will be done.*”

CHAPTER XXII.

NOR was the wretched Penelope the only sufferer by her crooked policy and broken faith. Vainly Mrs. Addington congratulated her son on his fortunate escape. He could not congratulate himself—he felt miserable—he was desolate! His love—the only love he had ever known—would not be uprooted with its false object; at each effort to rend it away, every fibre bled; but still he could not pluck it

out. Had Penelope's reason been restored, in all probability, pride and resentment would have given way to this intense, this constant passion, and he would have forgiven all, have risked all, to call her his. But this was impossible. He could not rest till he had discovered her retreat, and visited her there. He was miserable till he was convinced, by his own eyes, that she was surrounded with every comfort, and that she had every chance of recovery that skill and careful tending could give. He had been more than once ; he had seen her in all her moods, her terrible excitement, her abject imbecility, her deep dejection. To him, quite unconscious who he was, she had bewailed, in tones that rent his heart, Bernard's perfidy ; and then proudly proclaimed herself The Bride Elect of Mr. Addington. All hope died within him as he listened to her frantic entreaties to him to summon the

bridegroom, and attend her to the wedding feast.

But even after these dreadful interviews, he still remained a prey to the most torturing regret, and continued to mourn her with a tenderness she had so little deserved, and of which he was himself ashamed.

A great change took place in Mr. Adlington at this time. He neglected his business—he, once so neat, became careless in his dress,—he ceased to be punctual—his even temper was soured—his excellent health impaired. His mother's society was painful to him ; his house near Brighton unbearable. He was ordered to travel. He travelled, but *le chagrin monte en croupe et voyage avec lui*. He returned, but little benefitted ; and the first letter he opened on his return, was from Ruth Allworthy, announcing his mother's dangerous illness, and summoning him to

what all feared would prove her death-bed.

The shock awoke Mr. Addington's heart from its long and selfish trance. His mother dying! that dear, devoted mother! whom he had, of late, so shunned and so neglected. As he contrasted her true and passionate tenderness with the falsehood and treachery, for which he had sacrificed her; and as it struck him that, perhaps, to his desertion and ingratitude, might be owing her illness, and, perhaps—oh! God!—her death! he loathed himself—he loathed Penelope; and his insane regrets for one so worthless; and as rapidly as the express could bear him, he was conveyed to Brighton; and half frantic with alarm, repaired to his mother's house.

He found Ruth in constant attendance, and eager to tell him that no change for the worse, but, perhaps, a trifling one for

the better, had taken place since she wrote. The presence of her son, with his affection and attentions, increased ten-fold by remorse, so comforted her heart, and so exhilarated her spirits, that the crisis passed favourably ; and, in a few days, the penitent and intensely anxious son, heard, from the sweet lips of the saint-like Ruth, that his mother was pronounced out of danger.

His joy knew no bounds. It was with a light and grateful heart that, on this happy intelligence, he accepted his mother's invitation, conveyed by Ruth, to take tea with her in her bed-room.

Remorse is so exquisitely, so unbearably painful to a good heart, that when it was removed, he felt as if he had never known a care ; and when his mother, with feeble accents and tearful eyes, whispered, that to the more than filial care and tenderness of Ruth, she owed her life—and called her her adopted daughter, and blessed her—the

grateful, conscience-stricken son blest her too ; and as at that blessing, and the warm pressure of his hand, the long concealed love of her heart suffused her pale face with blushes, it struck him, for the first time, that she was lovely as well as good, and he whispered to his delighted mother—

“ Why, mother, little Ruth is grown quite a beauty.”

“ Oh ! that you could think her so,” said the delighted mother, seizing her son’s hand, and carrying it to her lips, “ then I could be content to live or die, for then I should know you would be happy.”

A new light flashed into Mr. Addington’s heart at these words. Ruth had a sort of instinctive consciousness of the import of Mrs. Addington’s whisper, and her shame and confusion kept up a succession of the most becoming and bewildering blushes.

Mr. Addington could not but look at her in her lovely emotion ; that roseate hue was all she wanted to make her a very pretty woman ; and the more he looked at her, the more engaging he thought her, and the more did his mother's suggestion please and soothe him. Already he begins to calculate the possibility of Ruth's having some other attachment, and the probabilities on his side, in case she is fancy free. The perfect contrast she presents in every respect to his false idol, is all in her favor. He longs to be alone with his mother, that he may question her closely about Ruth, and the state of her heart.

Since his return, Ruth has made his breakfast, and presided at his tea-table. She has walked with him in the garden, to talk to him of Mrs. Addington's convalescence ; and been the constant bearer of little messages between the mother and the son.

Ruth has long been much wanted at

home ; but till Mrs. Addington was convalescent, she could not think of leaving her. But that very day a pressing letter from her father, begging her to come home at once, if Mrs. Addington was out of danger, has decided her upon returning the next day. Her father's letter was written in very low spirits. He had, as he told Ruth, just heard that his Rector, whose health was restored, was coming to take the duty himself, and would require his services no longer.

“What we shall do, or where we shall go, I know not, my child,” he said. “I doubt not, God will provide for us. But I want your help, your advice, your sympathy, at this painful crisis. The time is short—the Rector will want his house—his furniture—and we must go forth and seek another home—another Cure. Alas! at my age, it will be hard to find—many will object to me on that score—and I so long used to this comfortable home, and a

sole charge, I shall feel very strange in some small lodging, and acting as a subordinate ; but with you by my side, my only darling, I will not complain. Only come to me directly, if you can.

“ Your loving father,

“ EDMUND ALLWORTHY.”

Ruth had shown this letter to Mrs. Addington, who begged her to leave it with her, that she might read it at her leisure. She had another object in view ; but Ruth, pre-occupied by her father's distressing news, did not suspect it.

To Mr. Addington's surprise and disappointment Ruth did not appear at breakfast the next day, and on questioning the servant he heard she had got off at dawn to return home.

He missed her quiet cheerfulness, her meek and kind attentions.

Mr. Addington felt fidgetty.

Mr. Addington felt comfortless and lonely.

Mr. Addington felt desolate.

Breakfast, which when Ruth presided, had lasted an hour, was dispatched in half that time, and a much shorter period would have sufficed, but for some important letters which required consideration. To Mr. Addington's heart at that moment the most interesting was one announcing the long expected death of the very old incumbent of the Rectory of Oakdale (the village in which Oak Park was situated) and the advowson of which living he had purchased with the estate.

Although the poor old man had only died on the preceding morning, a dozen clerical vultures had scented his decease, and as many letters in every style of entreaty, had reached the patron by the very same post which brought the announcement of the Rector's death.

In vain, in vain—in Mr. Addington's mind the living is already more than half promised.

After his visit to his mother's bed-room, and the perusal of the poor Curate's letter to his daughter, in Mr. Addington's heart the Rectory of Oakdale is already bestowed.

It was a lovely day at the end of October, Ruth had returned home in the morning, so early, that when her father came down to breakfast, he found her in her accustomed seat making his tea. The venerable old man looked care-worn and anxious, but his countenance brightened at his child's caresses and words of comfort.

They had so much to say, so much to consider, and to consult about, that after breakfast was over, and the things removed, they remained in the bright little morning room, Ruth working, and her father writing to different clerical agents in the hopes of obtaining a curacy, with (if possible) a sole

charge and a small furnished house (in part of stipend)—no matter where, town or country, north or south, large or small, duty light or heavy ! When a horse galloped up to the gate, the house-dog barked—the door-bell rang—a voice, a well-known voice in the hall made Ruth's heart beat, and her cheeks, brow, and bosom glow, and Mr. Addington entered the room ! We know how Mr. Addington found the dear good old Curate and the Curate's daughter. He found him in the fear of soon being, houseless and penniless, offering himself as a hireling to any one who would give *him* work ; and a roof and daily bread for his daughter and himself. He found the Curate's daughter, a single woman of thirty three, in her plain pink gingham dress, with her snowy linen collar and cuffs—her black silk apron, white cotton stockings and leather shoes—to her own thinking, a confirmed spinster, never having had an offer, or, to her knowledge, made

an impression on any man—never indeed having given a thought but to one whom she believes still devoted even to the memory of his false idol. He found her busily working, and helping her father, by her sensible suggestions, in his efforts to obtain another curacy, and content to follow his fortunes, and share any home he might obtain. Thus Mr. Addington found the Curate and his daughter.

It was late in the day when he returned home, and how did he leave them? He left the father, Rector of Oakdale, and the daughter his own affianced wife—his BRIDE ELECT—the future mistress of Oak Park, and the partner of his proud fortunes, but better, ah better still, the chosen, the fondly cherished of him, whom she has loved from her earliest youth, with a love whose unselfish devotion and sublime constancy deserved the reward it found.

The wedding was not long delayed.

The happy pair well deserved the name, and grew happier every year.

Mrs. Addington still lives to glory in her son, to superintend his wardrobe, to knit his stockings and boast of his virtues to the old Rector of Oakdale, who, with a little George on one knee, and a tiny Ruth on the other, listens delighted to the oft-told tale.

CHAPTER XXII.

POETICAL JUSTICE.

TREVOR TEMPLETON defeated, disgraced and disfigured, recovered from a long and painful illness, brought on by the irritation of his wound, and the impatience of his vindictive temper. He gave up all hopes of Geraldine, and of his degree, and having obtained from his uncle's contemptuous pity an allowance of two hundred a-year, shattered in face and fortune, he has retired to St. Omer's. There he flirts with French grisettes, (who think two hundred

a-year wealth), and plays billiards at the *cafès*, with English refugèes and French *commis-voyageurs*. He is devoured by spleen and *ennui*, and calls himself what he is, and well deserves to be, one of the most miserable dogs on the face of the earth! And Geraldine!—Geraldine is happy. Her father has *offered* her hand to one too honorable to seek to win her, and yet too passionately in love to be able always to conceal his devotion.

Feeling it *would* betray *itself*, and might betray *him*, he proposed leaving Richlands. Sir Trevor pretended to consent, but Geraldine, who thought him in earnest, suddenly fainted, and all the Father spoke from Sir Trevor's lips as, when consciousness was restored and her tears began to flow, he placed her hand in that of William Mercy, and hailed him, at once, as his son, and Rector of Richlands!

The wedding was in the good old style! Oxen were roasted whole—barrels of old

ale broached—the poor had an ample share of the festivities—and the whole village was wild with joy.

Geraldine would not hear of old Mrs. Mercy's leaving a house so long her home. The dignified and yet simple old lady would fain have retired to a cottage in the neighbourhood ; but Geraldine loved her—at first, for her son's sake, and, ere long, for her own—and her judgment and experience were a great help to the Rector's young wife.

Years rolled on, Isabel and her husband have returned from India, and Isabel's two children, a sweet girl and a cherub boy, have learned to spell the name of—

“BLANCHE ASHTON,”

“AGED 18,”

on the flat marble slab, which covers her early grave. They are fond of making little garlands and placing them on her tomb, and they talk of “Aunt Blanche,” in a way

which shows how often they must have heard of her from their mother's lips. Mrs. Ashton has long since left the lodge and taken up her abode near the sad retreat where Penelope unconsciously pines away, alternately moodily dejected and frenzied in her despair, occasional gleams of what she was, and what she still is adding to the anguish of her wretched spirit.

Her mother, chastened, subdued, and ever since Blanche's death an altered being, does all she can to comfort her when a glimmer of reason is vouchsafed, but that glimmer is so rare and so soon withdrawn, that no great advantage can be derived from it.

The elegant, well preserved, handsome Mrs. Ashton is now a bent old woman, prematurely old, but yet she is not miserable, for light has come out of darkness, good out of evil. In her prosperity she forgot her Saviour, He has not forgotten her in her adversity.

And often, when staying with her dear Isabel, and playing with her grand-children, and instilling into their young minds, truths she had forgotten, in early life, to teach her own girls, she is happier than she was in those proud days, when she basked in the sunshine of this world, and forgot that there is a better one to come. But for Penelope's wretched doom she would be happy, for she has ceased to weep for Blanche though she loves her fondly still.

CONCLUSION.

MR. PERCY ASHTON still frequents his club—thinner, paler, more feeble—he goes nowhere else—except to pay an annual visit to Sir Hector and Isabel. A little tremor in his hand, and a little working of his facial muscles, betrays what he thought he had contrived to conceal—a

.

slight touch of paralysis. It was caused by his rage and disappointment in Penelope's fate.

Mrs. Wylie had heard with real sorrow of the death of poor Blanche, for whom she had conceived a warm affection, and whose delicate health and dejected spirits had awakened her liveliest sympathy. Far different were her feelings on hearing of Penelope's false and treacherous conduct, and well-deserved, but far more piteous fate. She began to concoct a letter to Mrs. Ashton partly condoling with her about Blanche, and partly triumphing over the downfall of her pride and ambition, in the punishment which had fallen on the guilty Penelope. She was about to add to this unchristian attack on a broken-hearted mother, a triumphant description of the marriage of her eldest daughter to a Quaker merchant of immense wealth, and to inform her that the bride and her sister were enjoying a wedding trip to Paris, when her pen was arrested, and she was taught,

by her own experience, to pity a disappointed mother. The reputed Cræsus, her son-in-law, Obadiah Sharpe; a man supposed to be worth several hundred thousand pounds, has appeared in the Gazette. Immense speculations, intended to quadruple his fortune, have beggared him. He is bankrupt, not only in purse, but in honour; and many well-remembered circumstances convince the unhappy mother, that his sudden proposal to Miss Wylie was made because he found ruin inevitable, and was glad of her little fortune, so carefully amassed, to live upon abroad.

Misfortunes love a crowd, and the same letter which brought from her eldest daughter the news of her husband's bankruptcy, announced her sister's elopement with a French adventurer. This Frenchman Mrs. Sharpe described as a showy, moustachioed beau, who had travelled with them from Folkstone, and from the first had paid great attention to the bridesmaid, now Miss Wylie.

He pretended to be both noble and wealthy, and had the impudence to declare that he had been to England on a visit to Sir ——, who had ardently wished to make up a match between him and his only daughter, the celebrated beauty and heiress.

“C’est été un parti magnifique, meme pour moi,” he said, *“mais malheureusement la belle Georgina ne disait rien à mon cœur ! et je suis trop riche pour me sacrifier.”*

Miss Wylie listened and believed. The sly Adolphe, Baron de la Rue, soon obtained a perfect knowledge of her circumstances. He had been to London on a matrimonial speculation. He had completely failed, and had suddenly left the Bridge House Hotel, alarmed at the sight of a bill, which, moderate to our English notions, was to his French one *“énorme !”*

Miss Wylie really admired him ; but it was the idea of his wealth and rank that decided her on accepting him at once ;

and as her brother-in-law, who wished her to live abroad with him and his wife, that her income might be added to theirs, was very rude to Monsieur le Baron de la Rue, she eloped with him, and the result of an appeal to the authorities was the discovery that the *soi disant* Baron was by trade a hair-dresser, and by inclination a sharper.

After this dreadful news, Mrs. Wylie had no courage to finish her letter to Mrs. Ashton.

Indeed, so bitter was her disappointment in finding the fortunes, she had so denied and stinted herself to amass, for her girls, thrown away on a Quaker bankrupt and a French swindler, that all her philosophy forsook her, and she fretted herself into a bilious fever; nor were matters mended, when Mrs. Obadiah Sharpe and Madame la Baronne de la Rue, having both been cruelly ill-treated by the wretches they had married, returned to their half-broken hearted and invalid mother, to claim the shelter of her roof from the

brutality of the men, who had a legal right to all they possessed, and were determined to enforce that right; and only to connive at their return to their mother, and their escape from the vilest ill-usage, if all the income they could boast of was regularly paid their lords and masters. Resistance was vain; they were both more than of age, and neither could plead personal violence, though both had been treated with consummate insolence and cruelty,

No wonder poor Mrs. Wylie cannot recover her health, or her spirits, while she sees the little all, her daughters had had inherited, and which she, through life, had forborne to touch, paid annually to the Quaker bankrupt and the French barber.

Bernard Brydges, and his Dora, live on tolerably together in the comfortable receipt and enjoyment of their £200 a *month*.

She still keeps the purse, and he his temper.

We grieve to find, by the Brighton

Herald of last week, that Madame La Comtesse de la Pirouette, sporting her Bloomer costume too openly, was mobbed, and Monsieur Le Comte, flying to her rescue, was so abused, pelted, be-spattered—and both became so infuriated that they determined to sail that very night for ‘The land of the Bloomers.’ So sudden was their determination that they had not time to see their landlord, or settle their little bills.

Our tale is told. Its moral is sad and simple ; but is it not true to life ? Daughters of England ! If the fate of the “Bride Elect” should teach one dear English girl among you, to guard betimes her warm and unsuspecting heart, or warn one vain, delusive trifler of the peril of the sport he delights in, we have not written, nor have you read, in vain this ‘o’er true tale’ of ‘The Bride Elect,’ and ‘The Man of Unmeaning Attentions.’

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 042048055